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ABSTRACT

This toolkit presents a collection of accessible guidelines, measures, and tools to guide and implement evaluation of parenting education and support interventions. Designed primarily for people who are new to evaluation, it contains additional advice and guidance for those with a higher level of understanding or knowledge and it may also be useful as a teaching tool. The toolkit contains the following elements: an introduction to monitoring and evaluation and a brief overview of research methods; practical advice in planning an evaluation, taking into consideration such factors as resources, timing and working with external evaluators; discussion of issues particularly relevant to the evaluation of parenting programs (including ethical issues and researching with children); guidance on asking questions and devising questionnaires; examples of data collection tools, including standardized instruments; case-studies of real-life evaluations; a comprehensive glossary of commonly used research and evaluation terms; a reading list and references to other supporting materials; and a user feedback form. (GCP)

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Evaluation Toolkit

A Tailored Approach to Evaluation for Parenting Projects

Parenting Education &
Support Forum

National
Children's Bureau

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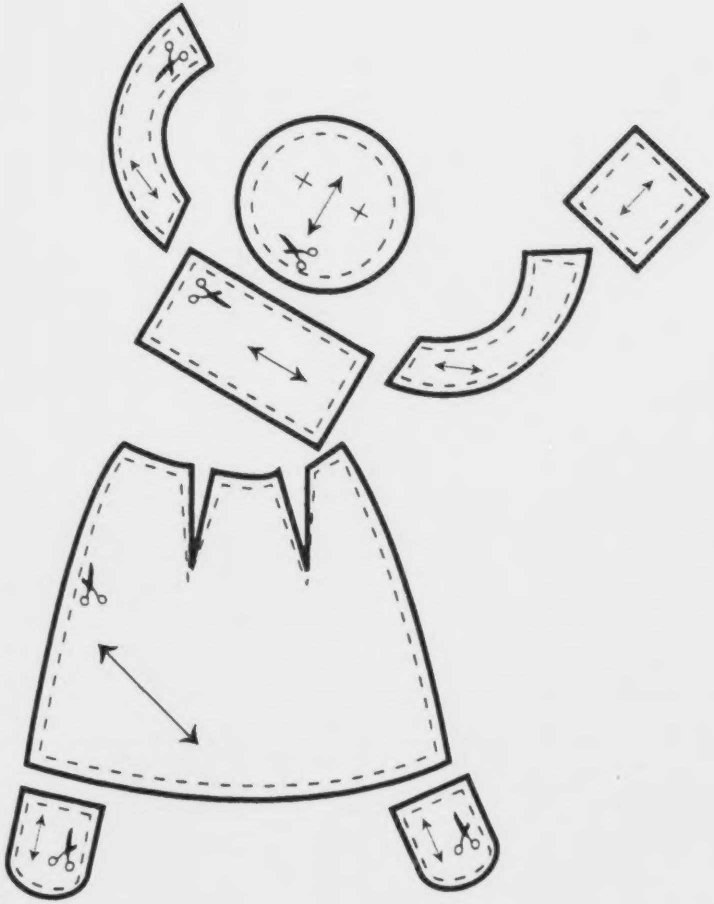

evaluation toolkit

a tailored approach to evaluation for parenting projects

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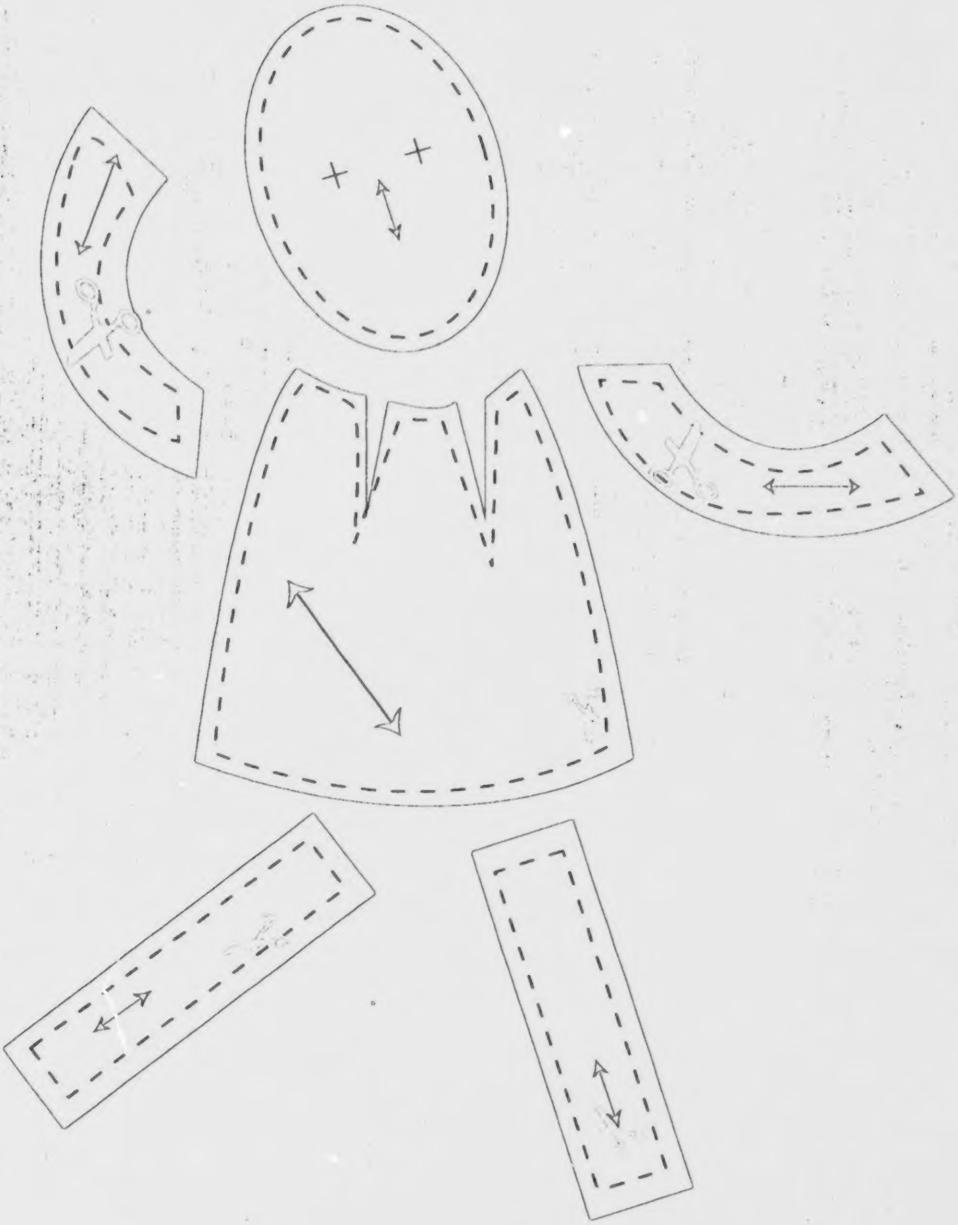
Contents



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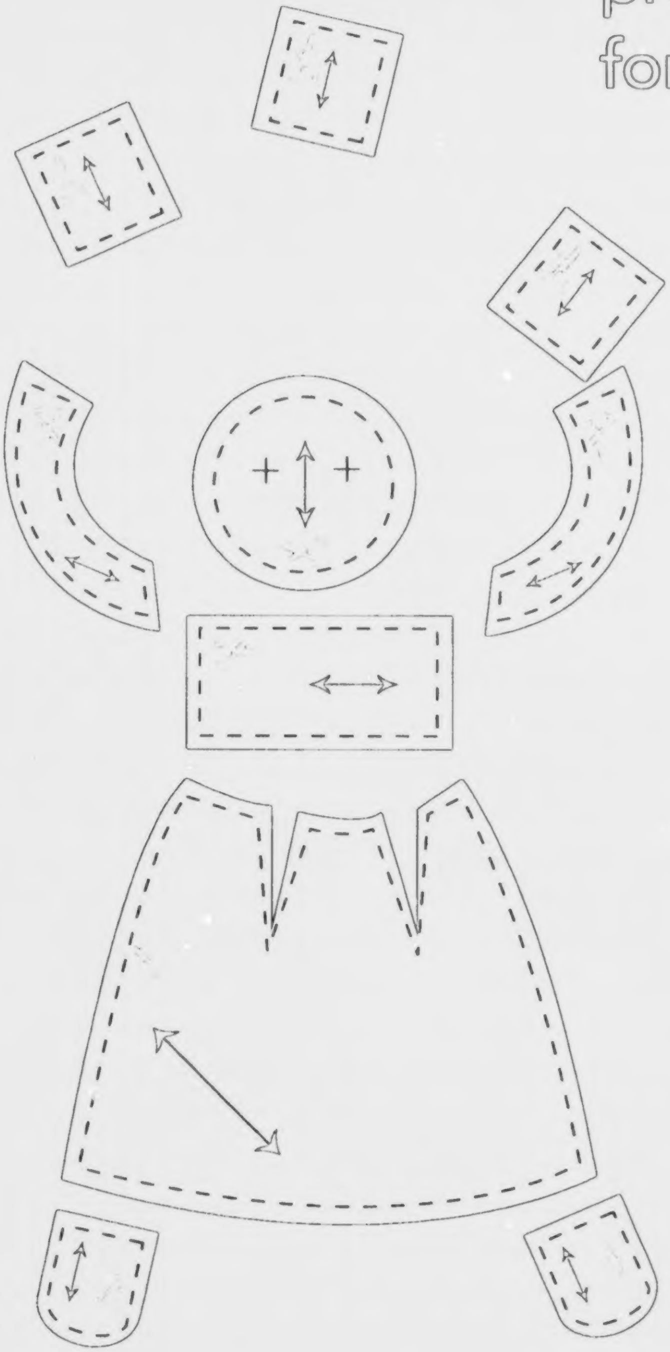
preface and foreword



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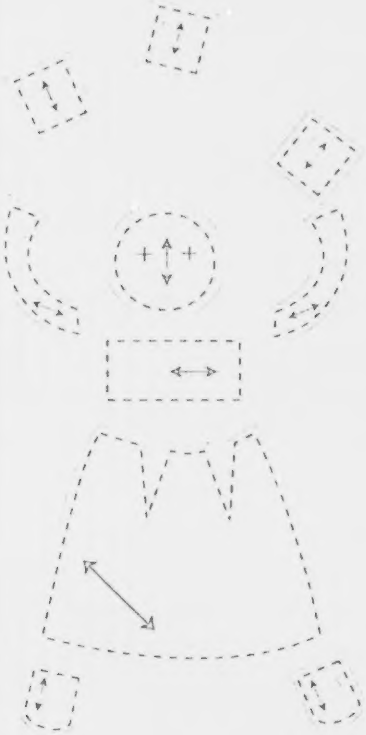
Preface



This Evaluation Toolkit has had a long gestation. It was inspired by the work of Celia Smith in her book Developing Parenting Programmes (NCB 1996). In researching the book she discovered just how few parenting programmes were evaluated, and that even fewer had undertaken an external, independent evaluation. Thus a schematic pro-forma for evaluation was included in the book in the hope that programme facilitators would use it, adapt it to their needs and, ideally, return it to the National Children's Bureau (NCB) to form the beginnings of an evidence databank. Sadly this didn't happen. Most of those working in the field were just too busy to respond and unless their funding stipulated it, too pressurised to add evaluation to the demands of project delivery.

The Parenting Education & Support Forum (PESF) was at that time in its infancy, based at the NCB and I was its first Development Officer. We were constantly being asked – by would-be practitioners, policy makers and service providers – for details of what works in parenting education and support, for details of evaluated and accredited programmes and for advice on the evidence base. There was very little to tell them.

It was always and remains our vision that parenting education and support should be properly established and recognised as a foundation stone of prevention and a principal element in health promotion and the development of life-skills generally. As part of realising that vision it was clear we needed to move the agenda forward on evaluation and crack what was then a stalemate: programmes were failing to attract continued funding because they weren't evaluated and with insufficient funding could neither continue service delivery nor undertake the necessary evaluation.

And so the idea of a user-friendly Evaluation Toolkit was born, a good 5 years ago, out of the many discussions I had with Celia Smith and Ruth Sinclair, Director of research at NCB and others. My aim was to create something that contained all-you-ever-wanted-to-know-about-evaluation-but-never-dared-ask! I hope we have achieved that, and I hope you will let us know whether we have and how we can make it better.

Many people have contributed to the creation of the Toolkit and deserve thanks. First and foremost is Catherine Shaw, Principal Research Officer at the NCB, who wrote the text and brought together a wide variety of elements translating them into language accessible to the non-researcher. The sensitivity and painstaking hard work she put into this can be seen in the Toolkit. Sincere thanks also to our distinguished Review Panel: Kaushika Amin, Jacqueline Barnes, Julie Bennett, Debbie Cowley, Anne Hobbs, Fiona Horigan, Trefor Lloyd, Jo Pitt, Fiona Taylor and chair of the Panel, Sheila Wolfendale. They commented on two drafts and attended a day's seminar during which many new ideas emerged for making the Toolkit more accessible and broadening its use. Thanks to Rose Gray for her suggested improvements.

Hetty Einzig
Research & Development Director
Parenting Education & Support Forum

Foreword

What is the best way to support parents so that their children grow up to be happy and well adjusted? This question was hardly asked 20 years ago, and did not seem to be especially important to many parenting organisations. They felt they simply knew that their particular way of working with parents was especially effective and was a good thing. Times have now changed. Parenting is much higher on the general social agenda, and many politicians are recognizing how crucial it is to ensure the next generation do well. Along with this has come a culture of evidence-based practice, and the urge to ensure that what organisations do is effective, and that money is spent on things that make a real difference to people's lives. Is all this a bureaucratic pain that would be better put aside so that people can get on with the job? I think not. We owe it to our children to ensure that we are not wasting valuable resources, time and money doing things which do not make any discernible difference to their lives. It is therefore only right that all of us in the business examine our practice and then modify it to improve it. Not to sign up to this process could be construed at least as unprofessional, and at worst positively unethical.

However, starting out evaluating can be a daunting task. I therefore have great pleasure in writing a foreword for this superb and thorough compilation of how to get started. The toolkit here is indeed a deep one with a range of tools to suit every working person. Moreover, it is extremely clearly written and rather than putting off the reader by going in at the deep end, offers different levels of evaluation, and encouragement all the way. What I find brilliant about it is the way it assumes that with a modicum of commitment and energy, all of us can do this. I am sure this is right and having worked both within my own organisation and with others, I can attest to how rewarding the whole process can be. As you go forward and gain more information, you often find yourself changing your practice in new and exciting ways which often unleashes new energy.

The Parenting Education & Support Forum and the author, Catherine Shaw (National Children's Bureau) are to be congratulated on the huge amount of work they have put into assembling this Toolkit. It is broad in its conceptual span, with useful measures to look at whether parents are satisfied with the service they are getting, whether they change their behaviour, and crucially, whether the child outcomes are improved. There are useful case examples of different types of evaluation, and a glossary of terms used in evaluation, audit and research so that apparently difficult terms are made easy to master.

These are exciting times for workers delivering parenting programmes. There is now a wide range, from behaviourally based programmes on the one hand, to those based on improving communication and relationships within families, to those striving to incorporate new understanding from developmental psychology such as how children form secure attachments and how they become emotionally literate and focus their energies constructively. This Toolkit provides a great way for any of us to get started along the road of discovery about our programmes and I commend it wholeheartedly.

Dr. Stephen Scott
Reader in Child Health and Behaviour, Institute of Psychiatry, King's College London
Consultant Child & Adolescent Psychiatrist, The Maudsley Hospital
Patron of the Parenting Education & Support Forum

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Author's acknowledgments

Particular thanks are due to Hetty Einzig of the Parenting Education & Support Forum for her energetic and enthusiastic support throughout the process, and to members of our Review Panel for taking the time to read various drafts of the Toolkit and for their valuable comments and suggestions.

I would also like to thank various members of NCB's research department for their support and advice: Rob Harnett, Rachael Harker, Nicola Madge and the Director of Research, Ruth Sinclair. In addition, Alison Hill, Gillian Potkins and Domini Stallings from the library and information service at PESF have been a valuable source of assistance.

Catherine Shaw
Principal Research Officer – Evaluation
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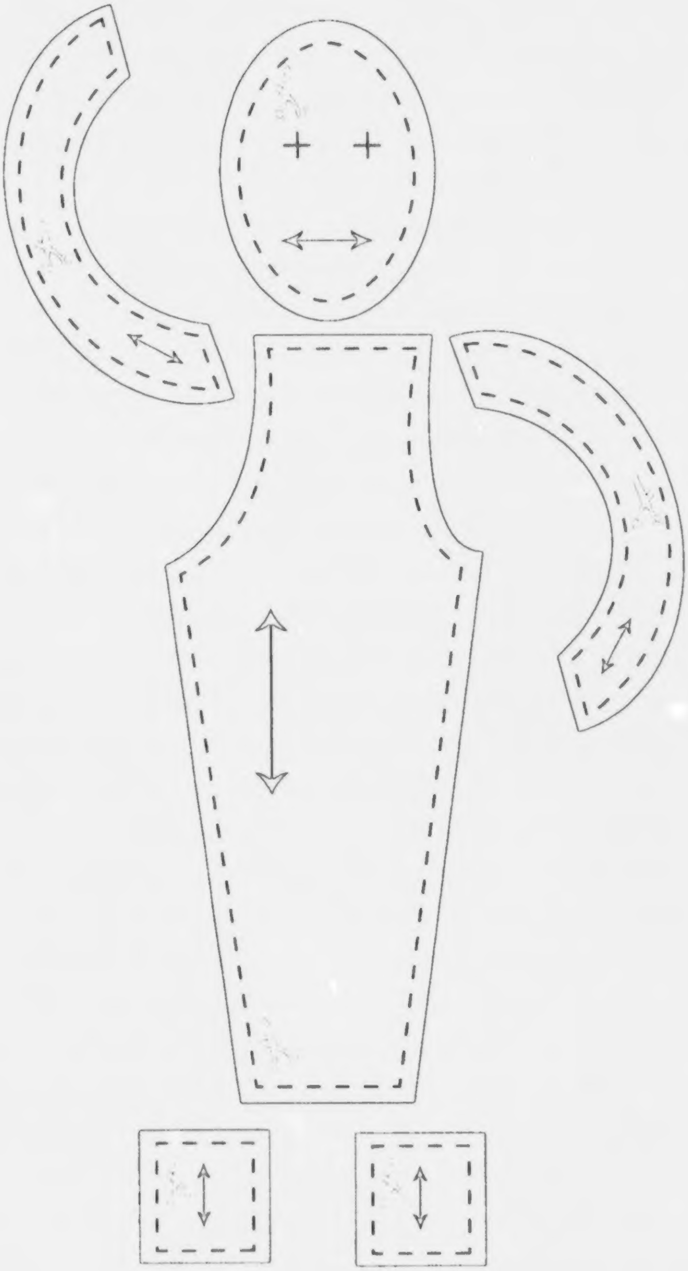
introduction



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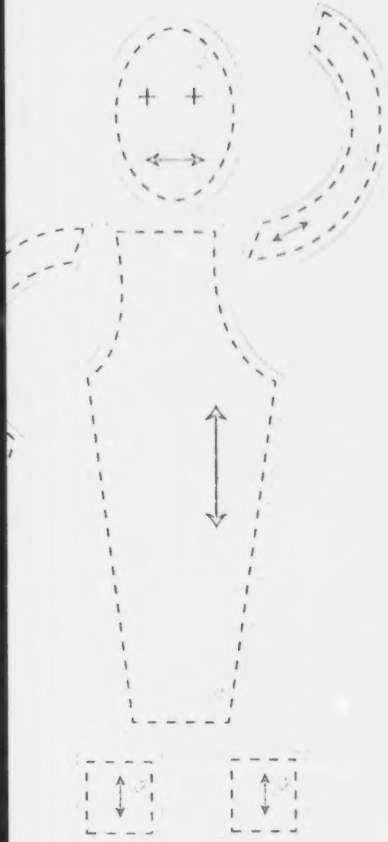
Introduction to the toolkit



The primary aim of producing this Toolkit is to assist parenting projects in the evaluation of their work. It was apparent from the start that this would be no easy task. Aside from the practical and conceptual challenges of evaluation itself, we were confronted with the sheer variety of settings in which parenting work takes place, the multitude of different models and approaches in use, and the range of needs being addressed. In addition projects vary tremendously in terms of scale and resources.

This Toolkit therefore does not contain 'one size fits all' templates or questionnaires. The objectives of different programmes differ considerably, and therefore different evaluation approaches and questions need to be employed. Clearly, an evaluation designed for a project supporting the parents of toddlers cannot be applicable to a school-based programme for the parents of adolescents.

So we have gone for a 'tailored to fit' approach. We have attempted to make the whole business of evaluation as accessible as possible to a wide range of users. We have tried to ensure that readers are equipped with as much by way of guidance, information and resources as they need, so you can design an evaluation that fits and suits your needs and style of working.

The Toolkit should help you to design an evaluation that is right for you and your project, taking into account the time, skills and resources available. We hope that it will enable you to engage in evaluation activities with confidence and a positive – yet realistic – perspective on what can be achieved.

Who's it for?

The Toolkit is designed primarily for people who have little or no prior experience of evaluation. But it also contains advice and guidance for those with a higher level of understanding or knowledge. It will be of use to practitioners and managers considering undertaking evaluation themselves, and also to those who may be commissioning external evaluators. It may also be useful for those teaching evaluation skills to others. It may also be useful for those teaching evaluation skills to others. While the Toolkit has been compiled to meet the specific evaluation needs of parenting projects, the general approach can easily be applied to a range of other social and educational programmes.

If you are a beginner, be reassured: you don't need to have specialist research skills in order to do some basic evaluation. The interpersonal skills you use everyday at work and at home are themselves essential to the evaluative process. What you may need to learn, or tune in to, is the evaluator's mindset. This and a few simple research techniques form the building bricks for a basic evaluation.

Nevertheless, there are clearly some evaluation approaches and techniques best left to the experts. We recognise that if you are working with external evaluators, you may require a broader overview and understanding of some of the more complex issues.

In order to point you towards what is relevant to your situation we have identified three broad 'levels' of user: basic, intermediate and advanced. At various points in the text we alert you to what might be appropriate according to the 'level' you are at. (Of course, you may not fit exactly into one category; the levels are intended as a guide only).

What level are you at?

Basic

- you have never done any evaluation before, or have very limited experience
- you may be lacking in confidence and knowledge about evaluation
- you are contemplating some sort of evaluation of your project or service
- you have limited time, research skills and resources

Intermediate

- you, or colleagues, may have some experience of conducting or commissioning evaluations
- you have gained some confidence and understanding through this
- you may be considering buying in expertise or commissioning external evaluation

Advanced

- you have had some training and experience in research methods, or have access to people who have (colleagues or external evaluators)
- you may be involved in teaching or studying a module in evaluation for practitioners or health professionals
- you may be a commissioner of evaluation and want to have a better understanding of what independent evaluators or consultants could do for you
- you probably have, or are raising, additional resources in order to buy in expertise or to free up (skilled, experienced) staff
- you are probably planning an evaluation from the start of a project or programme cycle and have a reasonable amount of time in which to plan and carry out the evaluation (allowing commissioning process, measurement at more than one point in time etc)

What is in the toolkit?

The toolkit consists of:

A: CORE DOCUMENTS

- Contents list – what to find where
- A process chart setting out all the stages of an evaluation from first idea to acting on the findings
- A set of golden rules to help you keep on track and avoid common pitfalls
- A feedback form (to help us with our own evaluation of the Toolkit)
- An evaluation summary form, so you can add details of your own evaluation to PESF's databank

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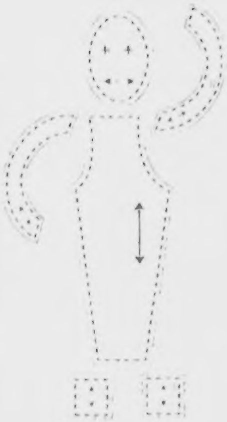

B: THE PROCESS evaluation in 10 stages

- Step by step guidance on designing and planning your evaluation

C: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- A comprehensive glossary demystifying the language of research and evaluation
- Case studies of real-life evaluations
- Descriptions and references for common outcome measures
- Reading matter for those requiring specific information (researching with children, working with external evaluators)
- References, websites and useful contacts for those who wish to delve deeper into the subject

Be warned – the Toolkit won't do the whole job for you! You will be guided through the process, alerted to questions you need to consider, provided with a few tools (and suggestions as to how to produce your own), shown a few examples of how others have done it, and pointed towards other useful resources. But the rest will be up to you.

How to use the toolkit

However you intend to use the Toolkit, your best starting point is the process overview chart. This is the 'backbone' of the Toolkit and serves as a guide both to the evaluative process itself, and to the contents of the Toolkit. Read or work through the ten stages, referring to the additional resources as required. Like all the best journeys, there may be interesting excursions along the way.

Who produced it

The Toolkit has been produced as the result of a partnership between the Parenting Education & Support Forum and the research department of the National Children's Bureau. Development and dissemination of the Toolkit is funded by a grant from the Home Office Family Policy Unit, the Sainsbury Family Charitable Trusts and the Artemis Charitable Trust.

User feedback

Finally, please don't forget to let us know what you think of the Toolkit, and how you have used it. The Toolkit contains a feedback form (accompanying stage 10). Please use it!
We would also very much like to receive information about your evaluations to add to our database. Please complete the evaluation summary form (accompanying stage 9) and return it to us, together with a copy of your report (if applicable).

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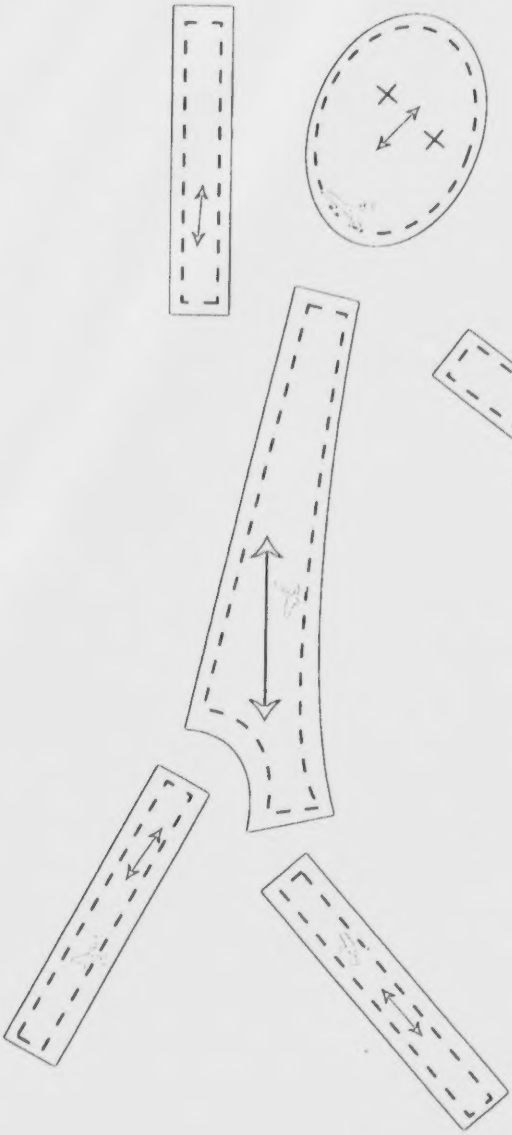
process overview chart



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process overview chart

stage	1	2	3	4
	EMBARKING ON EVALUATION	**WHAT KIND OF EVALUATION?**	**FRAMING EVALUATION QUESTIONS**	**EVALUATION DESIGN**
questions	□ Why are we evaluating? □ Who is the evaluation for? □ What is the purpose of the evaluation? □ What action or decisions may be taken on the basis of the evaluation findings?	□ What kind of broad approach would be appropriate to our circumstances? □ Who might be involved in our evaluation? □ What can we afford? □ How can we ensure an ethical approach?	□ What would we like to find out? □ What do other people need to know? □ What is required from the evaluation?	□ How can we find answers to our evaluation question(s)? □ What kind of evidence will we need? □ What methods will we use to collect the evidence?
read	EVALUATION OVERVIEW	TYPES AND STYLES OF EVALUATION	WHAT DO YOU WANT TO FIND OUT?	EVALUATION DESIGN
look at	□ READING RESOURCES AND CONTACTS (for other sources of ongoing support or assistance) □ CASE STUDIES (for examples of other evaluations)	□ EXTERNAL EVALUATORS (if this is a possibility) □ CASE STUDIES (for examples of different styles) □ Some ideas about a suitable type of evaluation	□ GLOSSARY	□ GLOSSARY □ CASE STUDIES (for examples of basic, intermediate and advanced evaluations)
now you should have	□ A firm commitment to evaluate □ A clear understanding of the reason for and the purpose of your evaluation.	□ Identified your major stakeholders □ Considered resourcing issues □ Investigated the need for ethical approval *Firm decisions about style may not need to be taken right now (this could come in stage 4 instead).*	□ Some SMART evaluation questions.	□ A practical, efficient and achievable evaluation design, all elements of which are directly related to answering your evaluation question(s)

5	2,3,4,5	6	7
SELECTING METHODS	***REVIEW AND REVISIT***	**DETAILED PLANNING**	**DATA COLLECTION IN PROGRESS**
☐ What methods would be most suitable? ☐ How will the data be collected (what tools or instruments are required)? ☐ What are the ethical implications?	☐ *Does the design address all our questions?* ☐ *Can we make our design more efficient?* ☐ *Are any of our evaluation questions over-ambitious?* ☐ *Are the chosen methods and our preferred style of evaluation compatible?*	☐ What will be happening and when? ☐ Who will be doing what?	☐ What practical difficulties may lie ahead? ☐ How can we minimise bias in our data? ☐ Are we adhering to ethical practices
METHODS		MAKING A PLAN	MATTERS ARISING
☐ READING, RESOURCES AND CONTACTS ☐ MEASURES ☐ FEEDBACK FORM (as an example of questionnaire) ☐ INCLUDING CHILDREN IN RESEARCH ☐ GOLDEN RULES		☐ GOLDEN RULES	☐ GOLDEN RULES
☐ Finalised your evaluation design ☐ Selected or designed tools	☐ *Revisited stages 2, 3 ,4 and 5* ☐ *Checked and tweaked as required*	☐ A detailed written plan and timetable ☐ Ensured the plan has been agreed by all relevant parties *NB for formative designs, elements of stages 6, 7, 8 and 9 may be running alongside each other, or repeated several times.*	☐ Taken practical steps to minimise bias where possible ☐ Collected some or all of your data

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6,7	8	9	10
REVIEW AND REVISIT	**MAKING SENSE OF YOUR DATA**	**COMMUNICATION AND DISSEMINATION**	**REFLECTING ON THE PROCESS AND USING THE FINDINGS**
☐ *Is everything going according to plan?* ☐ *What adjustments need to be made to the plan?*	☐ How can the data be organised and simplified? ☐ What have we discovered? ☐ How can we interpret the results? ☐ What conclusions can be drawn?	☐ Who needs to know about the findings? ☐ What do they need to know? ☐ When do they need to be told? ☐ What is the best way of informing them?	☐ Do the evaluation findings indicate that the service needs to be changed or developed in any way? ☐ What ideas do we have for future evaluation or further research? ☐ How helpful has the Toolkit been? ☐ How could it be improved? ☐ Back to stage 1?
GOLDEN RULES	DATA ANALYSIS	REPORTING THE FINDINGS	LOOKING BACK AND MOVING FORWARD
	☐ READING, RESOURCES AND CONTACTS ☐ GOLDEN RULES	☐ EVALUATION SUMMARY FORM	☐ FEEDBACK FORM ☐ CASE-STUDIES
☐ *Monitored progress regularly* ☐ *Amended the plan, if necessary*	☐ Organised, summarised and collated your data ☐ Some answers to your evaluation questions	☐ Informed relevant stakeholders of your findings ☐ Produced a written report (if required) ☐ Considered submitting details of your evaluation to PESF's data-bank	☐ Considered making changes to your practice or service ☐ Generated further evaluation ideas or questions ☐ Completed and returned your feedback form

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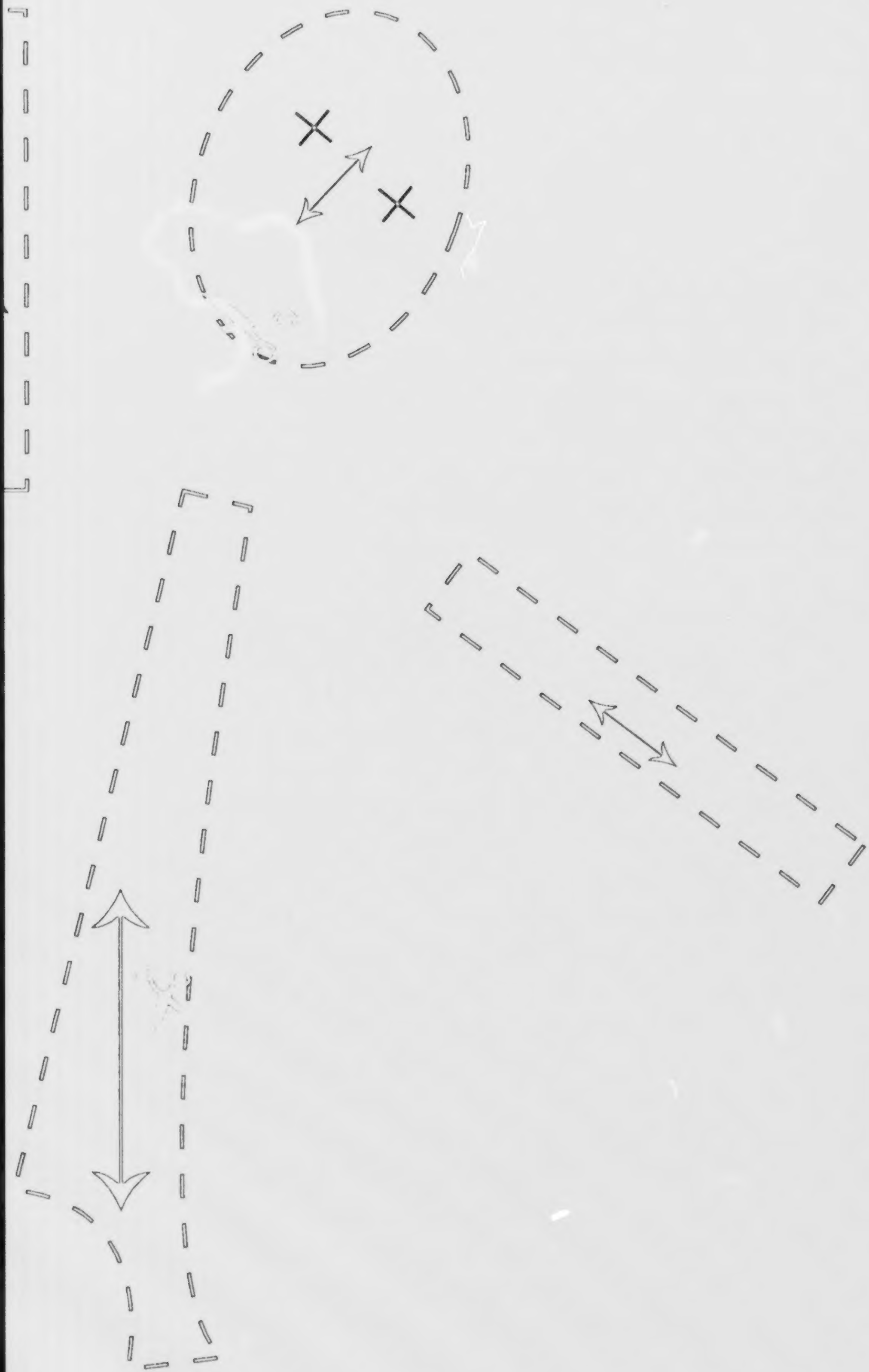

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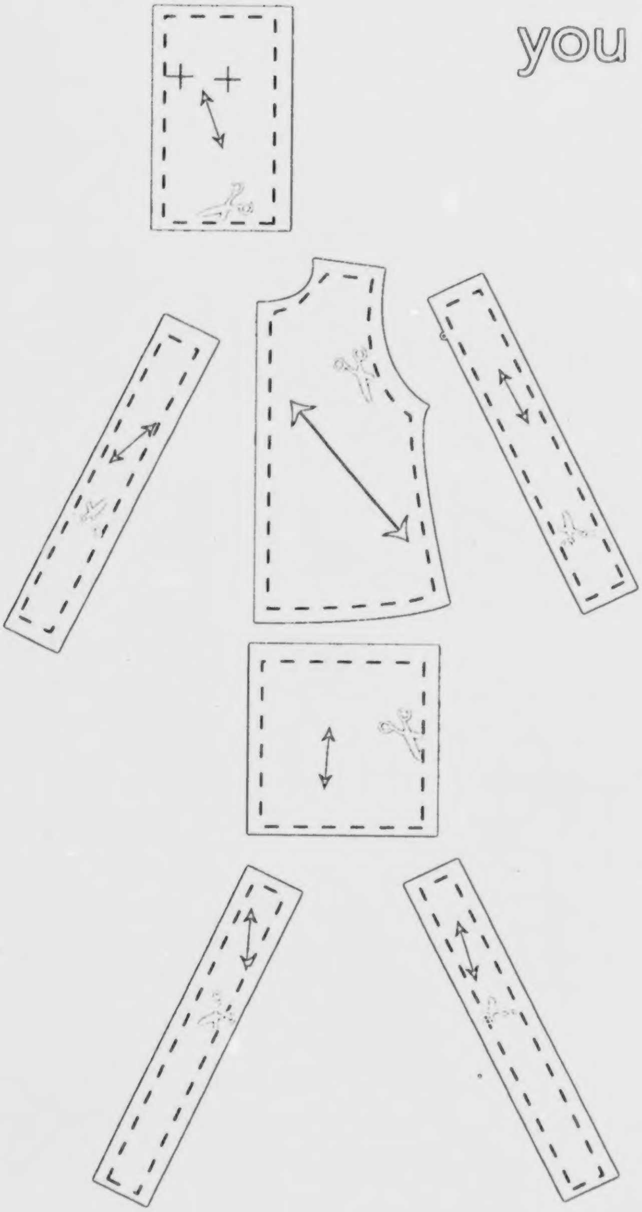
10 golden rules to see you through



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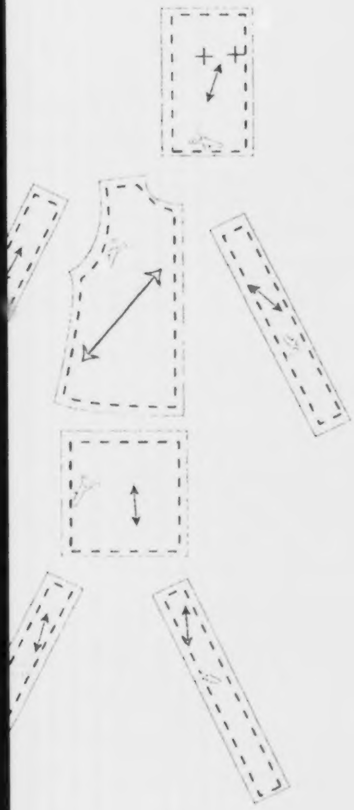
10 golden rules



1 **Prioritise the service.** Don't let evaluation issues dominate or adversely affect service delivery.

2 **Work in partnership.** Whatever the style of evaluation, service providers, evaluators, funders and service users need to work together to ensure that everything runs smoothly.

3 **Communicate.** Make sure everybody understands what is happening, when, why, and what will happen to the data. People will feel less threatened if the process is made transparent.

4 **Work to an overall plan ......** but be prepared to revisit, revise or tweak the fine detail – mistakes will be made, delays will occur, circumstances may change.

5 **Be prepared to be flexible** when necessary (but try to avoid constant chopping and changing). Don't persist in hammering square pegs into round holes – for example if the programme changes during the course of the evaluation (these things do happen) your questionnaire may no longer be relevant. So change it.

6 **Keep focused** on the essentials (your evaluation questions). Don't get led astray, however interesting those side-alleys may seem. Make a note of your ideas, but save them for another time, another evaluation.

7 **Put it in writing.** Keep notes of decisions made, reasons for particular courses of action, difficulties encountered, new ideas as they occur. These notes will be an invaluable record of the evaluation, and you will be glad of them when you come to write up your report.

8 **Be reflexive.** Reflect on the process, question assumptions, think the unthinkable, consult your gut feelings, and muse over what it all might mean ... this may seem indulgent or subjective, but in fact is an important precursor to data analysis and interpretation.

9 **Don't keep it to yourself.** Discuss ideas, emergent findings, problems as they arise. Several heads are generally better than one.

10 **Above all – don't panic!** Evaluation can be a messy and unpredictable business. Remember, you are dealing with 'real life', not a laboratory situation. Whilst careful focusing and planning should ensure a smoother ride, it is quite normal to experience some hiccups and challenges along the way.

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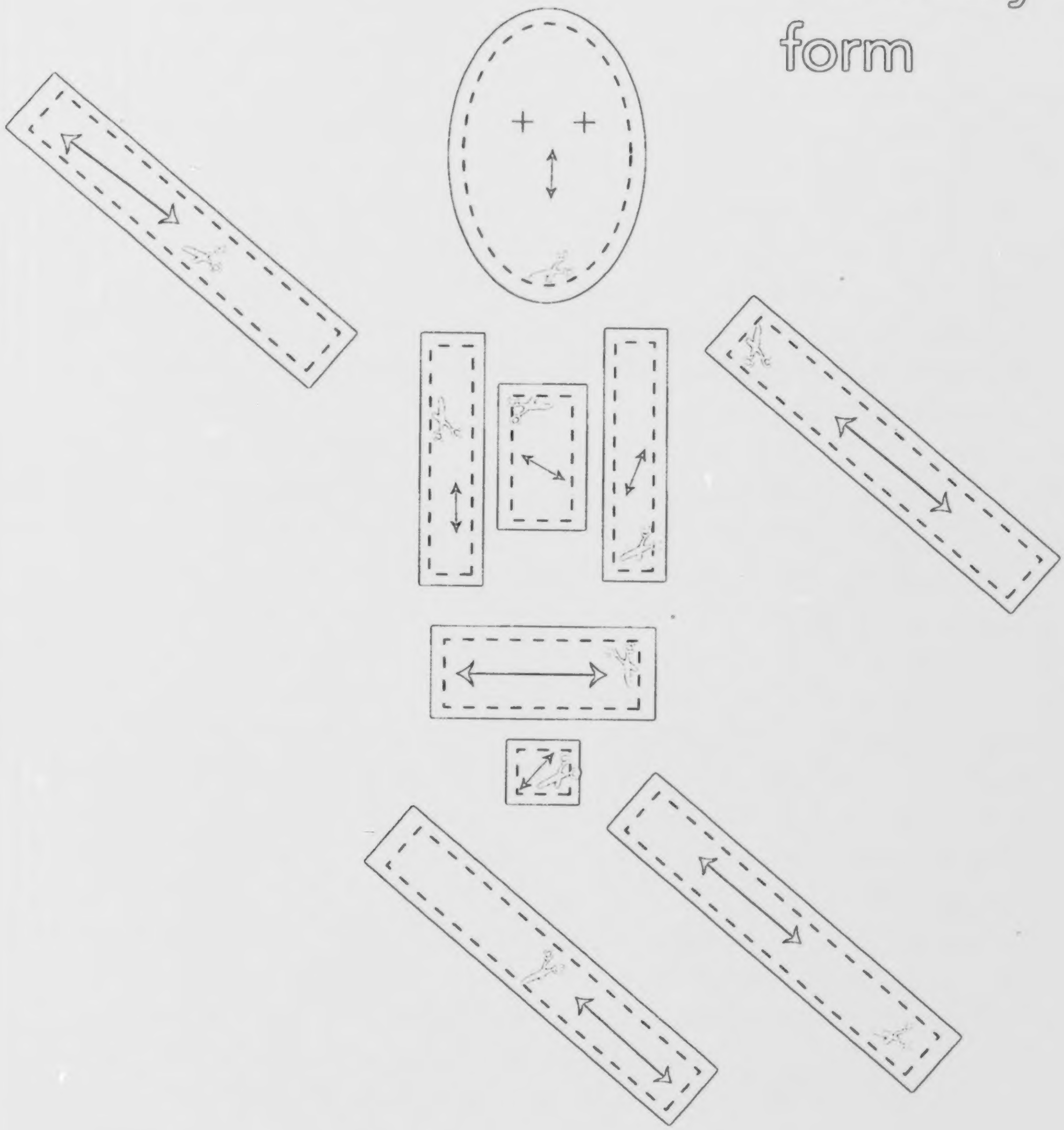
evaluation summary form



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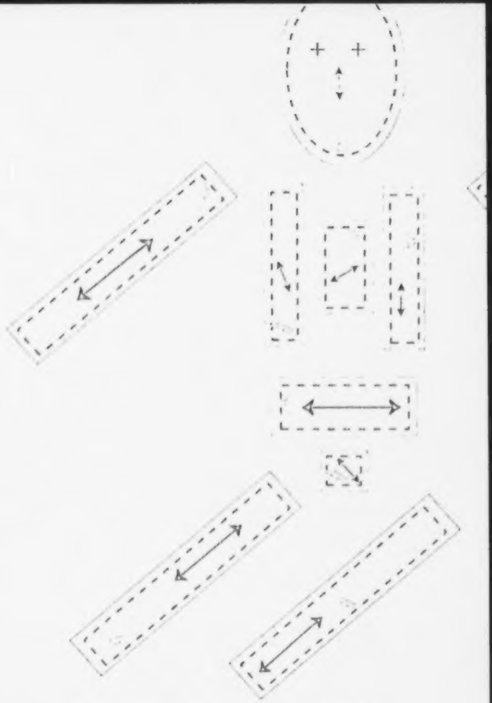

This form is also available on the PESF website
www.parenting-forum.org.uk

The Parenting Education and Support Forum would like to receive details of your evaluation to add to its data-bank. If you have recently completed an evaluation, please photocopy and complete this form and send it, with a copy of your evaluation report (if applicable) to:
Parenting Education & Support Forum,
Unit 431 Highgate Studios, 53-79 Highgate Road,
London NW5 1TL

020 7284 8370

Please note: we are interested in all types of evaluations, large and small, informal and formal, and are particularly keen to get details of otherwise unpublished evaluations.

Contact name	
Address	
Phone	
Email	
Role / Job Title	
Name of project or service	
Sector	
Brief description of project / service (including staffing, size, type of work, target group etc)	
Who carried out the evaluation?	

How was the evaluation funded?	
When did evaluation take place?	
Style of evaluation and methods used	
Main findings	
How have the evaluation findings been used?	
Other lessons learned?	
Reference (if applicable) – how can others access your report?	

Details of evaluation

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tel 020 7284 8370 fax 020 7485 3587 email pesf@dial.pipex.com website www.parenting-forum.org.uk

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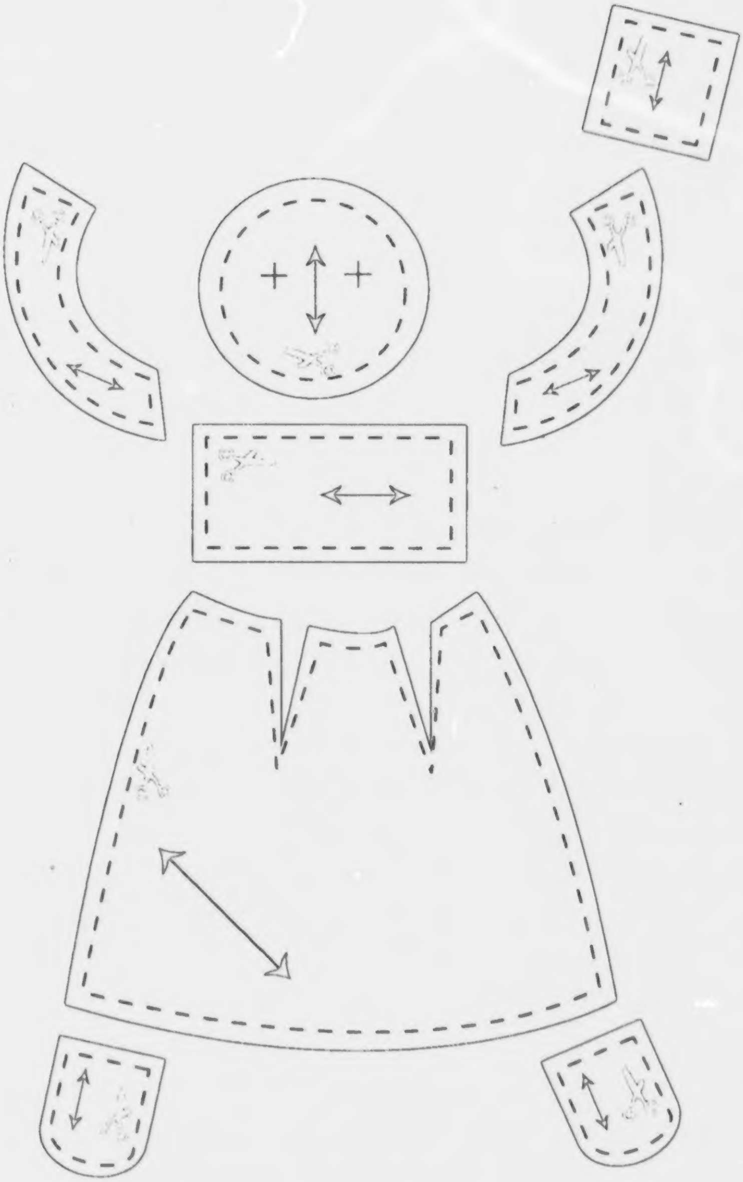
feedback form



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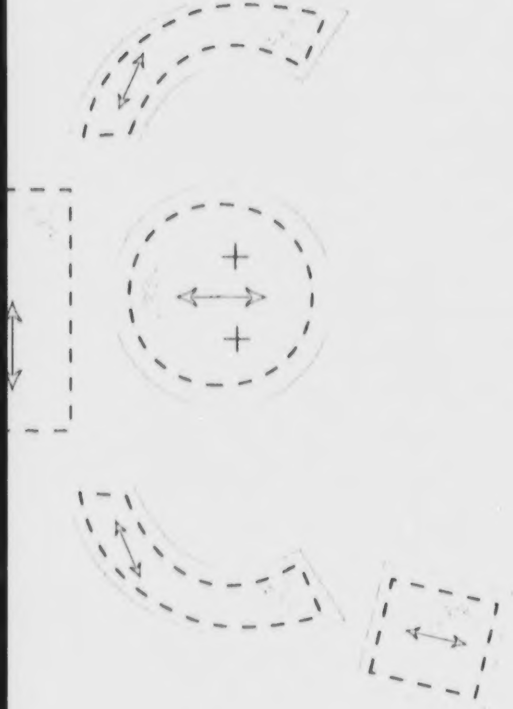

When you have read or used all or some of the Toolkit, we'd like to know what you think … (this is part of our evaluation of our own work). Don't feel you have to have worked through the Toolkit from start to finish in order to voice your opinion – we would rather have some interim feedback than nothing at all!

Please photocopy this form, keeping the original in the Toolkit. The form is also available on the PESF website www.parenting-forum.org.uk and can be completed and returned by email.

1. Your position / job title:

2. Sector you work in:

Social services ☐
Education ☐
Health ☐
Voluntary sector ☐
Other (write in) ☐

3. Department / type of organisation / project (eg Family Centre, CAMHS, children's charity etc):

4. What, if any, experience did you have of evaluation before using the Toolkit? (tick as many boxes as apply)

None ☐
Done a little evaluation myself ☐
Done quite a lot of evaluation ☐
Been part of an organisation or service that was externally evaluated ☐
Commissioned external evaluation ☐
Read other books or guides to evaluation ☐
Read evaluation reports of other services ☐

5. How, if at all, have you used the Toolkit so far?
(tick as many boxes as apply)

Not at all (skip to q9) ☐
Just read some or all of it ☐
For reference purposes ☐
Have shared it with colleagues ☐
Have used it in designing an evaluation ☐
Have used it in commissioning external evaluation ☐
Have used it to support ongoing evaluation ☐
Other (describe) ☐

6. How useful did you find the Toolkit?

Very useful ☐
Quite useful ☐
Not very useful ☐
Not at all useful ☐

7. Which part(s) of the Toolkit, if any, did you find most useful and why?

8. Which part(s), if any, did you find least useful and why?

9. How, if at all, do you think you might use the Toolkit in the near future? (tick as many boxes as apply)

Not at all ☐
Just reading some or all of it ☐
For reference purposes ☐
Share with colleagues ☐
Use it in designing an evaluation ☐
Use it in commissioning external evaluation ☐
Use it to support ongoing evaluation ☐
Other (describe) ☐

10. What, if anything, would you like to see more of (or to have added to the Toolkit)?

If you have any other comments at all about the Toolkit, please write them on p.4, overleaf.

Thank you very much for taking the time to fill in this feedback form.
Please return completed forms to:

Hetty Einzig
Research & Development Director
Parenting Education & Support Forum
Unit 431 Highgate Studios
53-79 Highgate Road
London NW5 1TL
Or email to: heinzig@dial.pipex.com

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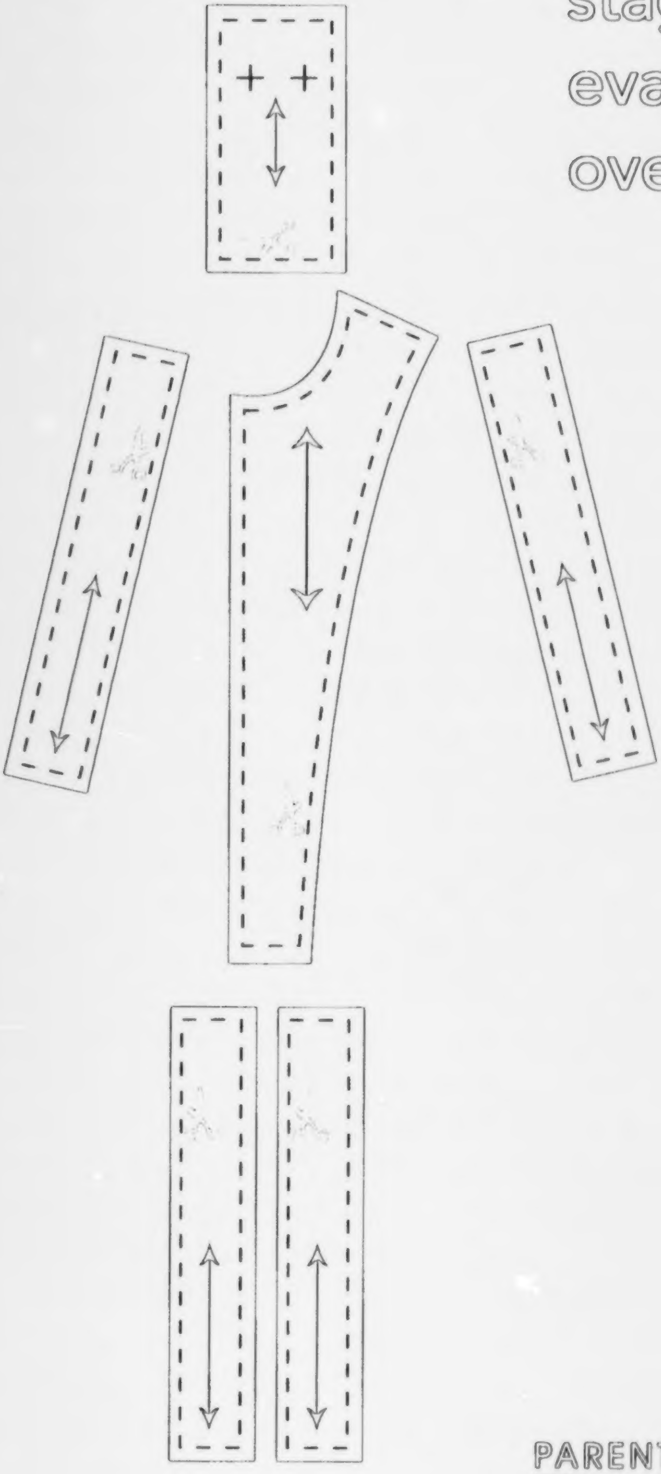
stage 1: evaluation overview



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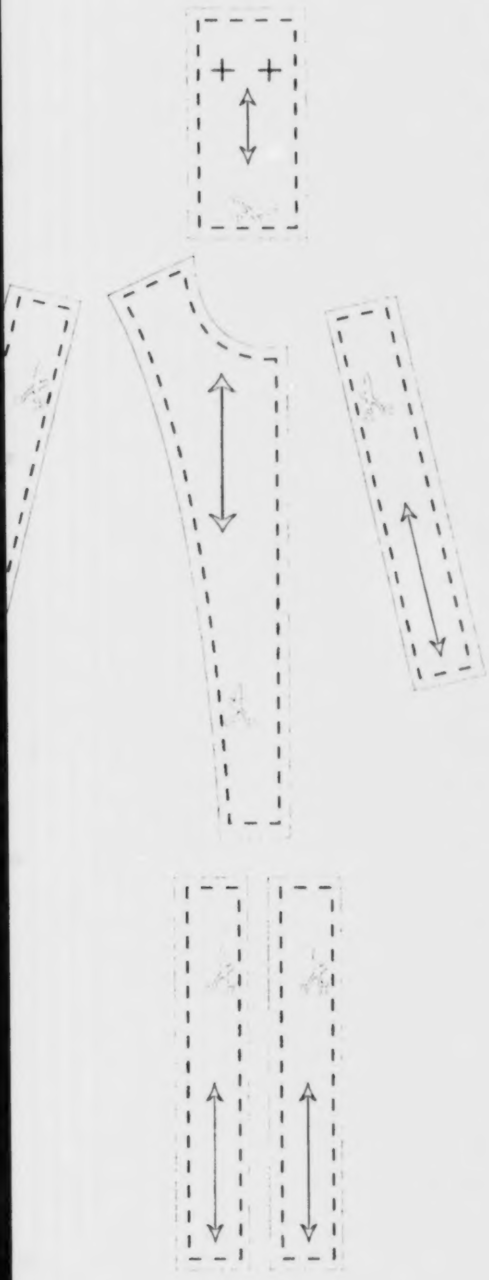
Starting point:



At this stage, you may be entirely new to evaluation and want a general introduction to the field. Alternatively, you may want to clarify some of the different uses and applications of the word evaluation. This text raises and briefly discusses some of the more general questions around evaluation, its meaning and its uses.

Questions to be considered at this stage:

- Why are we evaluating?
- Who is the evaluation for?
- What is the purpose of the evaluation?
- What action or decisions may be taken on the basis of the evaluation findings?

You may also want to look at:

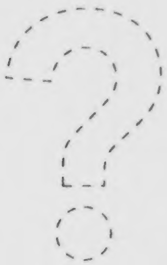
- READING, RESOURCES AND CONTACTS – for other sources of ongoing support or assistance
- CASE STUDIES – for examples of other evaluations

By the end of this stage you should have:

- A firm commitment to evaluate
- A clear understanding of the reason for and the purpose of your evaluation

It is part of the human condition to be curious and evaluation is just one application of this curiosity. It is about formulating and answering questions. When looked at in this light evaluation may seem less of a chore and more of a challenging quest.

1.1 So ... what is evaluation?



How long is a piece of string? Readers will be aware of many different and often confusing uses of the word 'evaluation'. It is used to cover many types of activities, and can be applied to a wide range of different contexts.

For example:

- In medical research, evaluation may be related to determining the effectiveness of a type of treatment or drug; in such cases rigorous scientific standards are applied to the evaluation. You may have heard of terms such as 'Randomised Controlled Trial' and 'double blind' tests in this context.
- For some people evaluation is interpreted narrowly to refer to 'value for money', and implies a cost-benefit analysis or assessment of cost-effectiveness, and comparison with other services.
- The word is sometimes used to describe the process of checking whether a project met its objectives, and involves analysis of numbers, targets, performance indicators etc.
- You may have attended a course, the final activity of which consisted of filling in an 'evaluation' sheet to be completed and returned to the trainers. You may already use such feedback methods in your own project

All of the above involve some aspect of evaluation. They are all attempts to assess the worth or value or effectiveness of something. Note that there are a range of different methods and activities involved (experimentation, counting, observing, asking questions). These activities can be carried out by a range of different people (scientists, economists, social researchers, and also project staff themselves). And they can be looking at a number of different aspects of a service or programme: how much it costs; what people think of it; how many people receive it; what actually happens during the programme; and what the short or longer-term effects may be.

Here are a couple of dictionary definitions of evaluation:

- to put a value on something
- to determine the significance, worth, or condition of, usually by careful appraisal and study

Note that the word evaluation is derived from 'value', which implies an assessment of both quantitative worth (how much?) and qualitative worth (how good?).

1.2 What can be learned from evaluation?

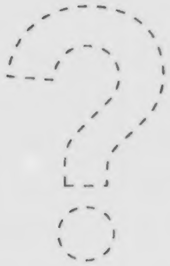
Evaluation and evaluation findings can be put to more than one use, and can benefit a range of different people. The evaluation process and its products can assist in any or all of the following (depending on the design):

- Providing a systematic *description* of the programme in practice
- Demonstrating the *effectiveness* of a project or service
- Identifying (reported or observed) *benefits* for participants
- *Highlighting* which elements of a programme are most effective, and for whom
- Offering *explanations* of why certain elements work
- Providing 'objective' *evidence* to support practitioners in reflecting upon their practice
- *Improving* a programme while it is running (some evaluation designs can feed back findings during the course of the evaluation)
- Providing advice on the *replicability* of a programme
- *Empowering* users and volunteers who have been involved in the process (improved skills, opinions valued, ideas listened to and acted upon)
- Advancing knowledge and *understanding* of social phenomena

Health warning: Limits to what evaluation can establish

It will not always, or indeed often, be possible to be sure that any observed positive effects can be attributed to the programme or service itself (you would need a randomised controlled trial in order to demonstrate this with certainty). Your evaluation will therefore probably not put you in a position where you can state unequivocally that your parenting project 'works'. Don't be down-hearted. Be prepared to settle for less, but be confident about what can be said and about what has been shown. Focus your energies on the achievable and meaningful.

1.3 Why evaluate?



The range of possible benefits and learning opportunities outlined above is not always what inspires evaluation. There is a range of reasons why people become involved in evaluation. For some this is compulsory – somebody else is initiating the evaluation or making the demands. In other cases, the drive may come from within. Either way, it is important to be aware of who the end 'users' of the evaluation will be.

To meet the needs of funders and managers

This may amount to little more than the provision of management information, demonstrating accountability by providing quantitative information about the service and its users (more properly, this should be referred to as monitoring rather than evaluation) in order to demonstrate that the money is being used as planned. However, for increasing numbers of projects (for example, those located in the voluntary sector, or involved in local initiatives such as Sure Start or the Children's Fund), funders are demanding more in terms of evaluation. Sometimes it is stipulated that this must be 'independent evaluation'.

For security, to demonstrate the worth of a project or programme
Even if evaluation is not compulsory, voluntary sector, cuts-threatened or time-limited projects may nevertheless feel the need to demonstrate the worth of the service to current or potential funders. Projects, managers and workers may consider (rightly) that something beyond anecdotal evidence will be required in order to give their service the edge over competing projects in a climate of budgetary constraint. In such instances, some form of systematic evaluation, however simple, may be able to provide persuasive evidence.

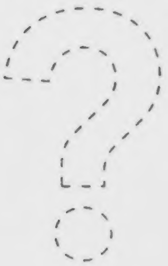
To inform and improve practice
In other instances the push for evaluation comes from within the service itself. Managers and staff in an established service naturally want to know how appropriate and effective their work is, and ways in which their practice could be improved. They may be seeking answers to fundamental questions: Are we reaching our target population? Are we meeting the needs of our client group? What happens to people after the parenting programme finishes? Alternatively, evaluation may form part of a more formal process of review, or have been triggered by quality assurance requirements (the PQASSO system now being adopted in increasing numbers of small voluntary sector projects includes a quality standard on monitoring and evaluation).

To accompany innovation or experimentation, piloting a new type of service or trialling materials
While the move towards 'evidence-based practice' suggests that the 'tried and tested' is paramount, there nevertheless remains room for innovation and the development of new programmes and services (ideally, of course, planned with due reference to available evidence, where such evidence exists). In order to further enhance the existing evidence-base, it is vital that such new programmes and services are evaluated. What might have seemed a good idea at the time may not work in practice, or may not work in a particular setting, or for a particular sub-group of the client population. On the other hand it may turn out to provide all sorts of benefits, to all sorts of parents. Either way, the world needs to know about it.

An opportunity to answer some of those niggling questions
Even if the requirement to evaluate has been imposed by an outside body, there may still be scope to address additional – relevant – questions within the evaluation remit. Different stakeholders will, inevitably, have different interests. At the academic end of the scale, a psychologist may wish to investigate effects

on the mother-child relationship in families who have received education in child development. A policy maker may wish to know whether participation in a particular type of parenting programme has the long-term effect of reducing exclusions from school. A course facilitator on the other hand may wonder why it is that parents from a particular estate seem reluctant to attend the group, or why people seem to 'switch off' during a certain session. A manager may want to know whether providing a crèche makes a difference to attendance at a course. Funders may wish to assess whether the programme represents good value for money. The people who raise such questions will usually have a 'hunch' as to the answer, but this needs to be confirmed (or refuted) if action is to be taken.

1.4 How may evaluation findings be used?



By the project itself

To make internal changes and improvements:

- Staff development and training needs may be indicated (to enable them to meet the needs of a culturally diverse group of parents, for example)
- Content of a parenting programme may need to be changed (feedback from parents may indicate that they would like additional topics to be covered)
- Practical arrangements could be adjusted (for example the day, time, venue, length or number of sessions)
- More effective targeting, in order to reach those parents who would most benefit (monitoring may reveal that very few young isolated mums are being reached by the programme)
- Systems may need to be refined (for example referral or assessment procedures)

To publicise the benefits of the programme or service:

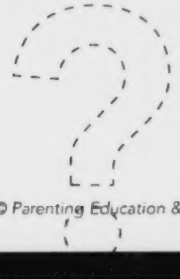
- To referrers
- To parents (current users and potential recruits)
- In future funding applications
- To support the case for replication

By others

To make changes to the service as a whole:

- Extension of existing funding
- Possible cuts to the service (although be realistic – this may happen with or without an evaluation)
- Replication of service elsewhere

1.5 When to evaluate?

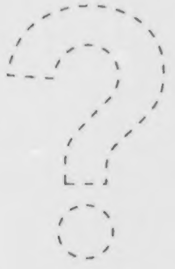


Evaluation should not be a retrospective process, something that is only thought about or 'done' towards the end of a project or programme. Advance planning is key to a really useful evaluation. However, we do recognise that this will not always have occurred, and that some readers will be in the unenviable position of having to pull together an evaluation at the last minute. Bear in mind that this is not ideal, and that many important opportunities will have been missed (it is unlikely you have all the baseline data you would have wanted, for example).

From the start – if at all possible

If a new service or project is planned and is to be evaluated, it is vastly beneficial *if* the project and evaluation can be planned in tandem. All too often the evaluation is 'tacked on' at a later stage, or as an afterthought. By the time the decision to evaluate has been taken, many important decisions about the project will already have been made. Such decisions may have adverse consequences for the methodology or rigour of the evaluation. For example, it may be possible to build in a control or comparison group at the set-up stage of a project, but much more difficult later on when referral systems and procedures are already in place. It may also be appropriate to extend the evaluation beyond the duration of the programme itself, in order to examine the longer-term effects of the intervention.

1.6 Who can evaluate?



You do *not* need to be a professional evaluator to be involved in evaluation. Everybody is capable of carrying out a range of basic evaluative tasks. Evaluation can be done from 'inside' the project, and by a range of different people from within, as well as by external evaluators. However, what you are able to achieve with your evaluation will inevitably be constrained by the skills and resources at your disposal. Most importantly – evaluation does not have to be done by one individual alone. Indeed, collaborative efforts are usually preferable, not only in terms of more hands on deck, but to provide a sounding board for ideas, a range of perspectives, and support at times when things aren't going according to plan (which will inevitably be the case at one time or another).

1.7 Evaluation's close relations

Evaluation is closely related to, and often confused and combined with, a number of similar activities and procedures. Just to clear up any confusion, these are dealt with briefly below:

Monitoring

Monitoring is largely concerned with keeping track of the progress of a project, rather than attempting to establish its worth. This can include routine data collection about service users and services provided. Most evaluations should include an element of monitoring, but monitoring on its own does not usually constitute evaluation.

Assessment of need

This kind of exercise is usually about establishing the need for a service at community level, and as such is likely to be undertaken before a project is set up, rather than at the evaluation stage. However, asking whether a new or existing service meets the needs of its actual clients is somewhat different and could be a legitimate evaluation question.

- **Reviewing existing evidence**
  This involves collecting and assessing the findings from existing research and evaluation in order to ensure that new services are planned and developed on the basis of what is already known to be effective, leading to what is known as 'evidence-based practice'.

- **Quality assurance**
  Many organisations are now adopting quality assurance systems (such as PQASSO, the EFQM Excellence Model or Investors in People). Such systems are generally focused primarily on the organisation itself and assessing its internal procedures and systems against particular standards, rather than looking at impact or outcomes for service users.
  The Parenting Education & Support Forum is developing National Occupational Standards for the parenting sector. Further details are available from the Parenting Education & Support Forum.

1.8 So, what do we mean by evaluation in this Toolkit?

Our working definition: **Evaluation consists of a set of systematic, planned activities designed to assess the effectiveness or worth of a service or programme.**

Before moving on, you may wish to note down your thoughts and conclusions:

Why are we evaluating?	
Who is the evaluation for?	
What is the purpose of the evaluation?	
What action or decisions may be taken on the basis of the evaluation findings?	

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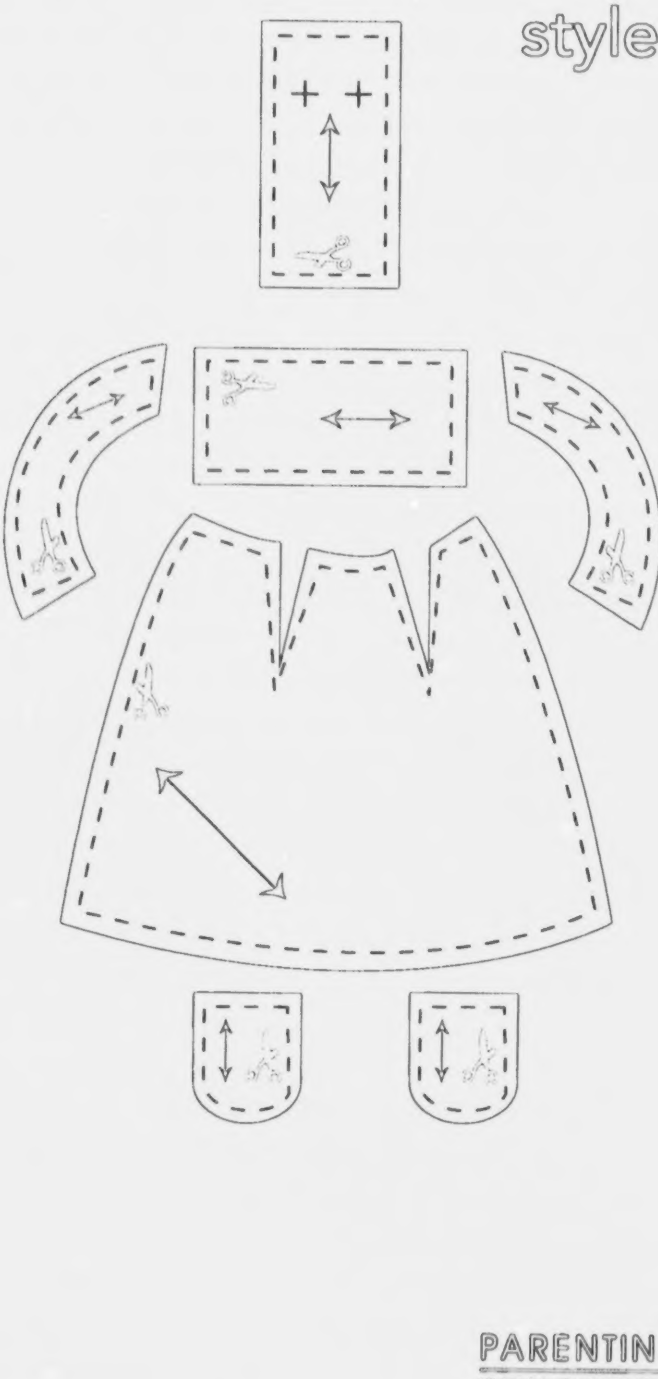
stage 2: types and styles



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Starting point

You have decided to go ahead with an evaluation. This stage introduces you to some of the common approaches to evaluation, and raises some of the broader issues such as stakeholder involvement and ethical considerations that need to be thought about at an early stage. No firm decisions need to be taken yet.

Questions to be considered:

- ☐ What kind of broad approach would be appropriate to our circumstances?
- ☐ Who might be involved in our evaluation?
- ☐ What can we afford?
- ☐ How can we ensure an ethical approach?

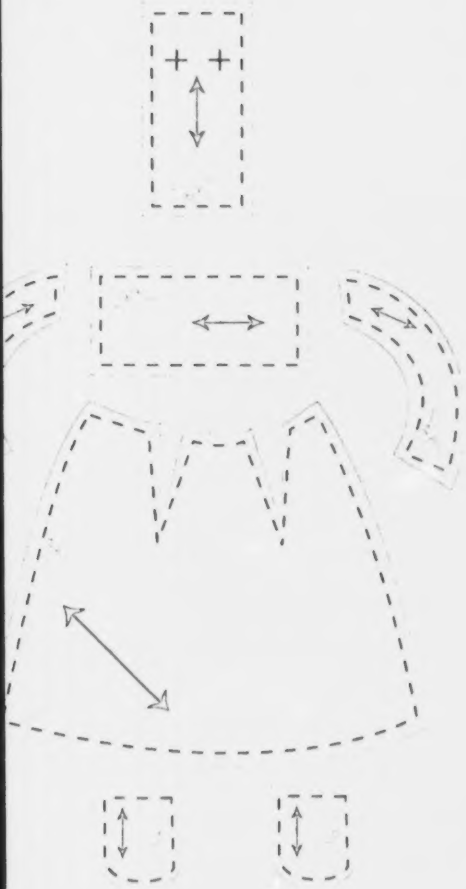
You may also want to look at:

- ☐ EXTERNAL EVALUATORS section (if appropriate)
- ☐ CASE STUDIES (for examples of different styles)

By the end of this stage you should have:

- ☐ Some preliminary ideas about a suitable type of evaluation
- ☐ Identified your major stakeholders
- ☐ Considered resourcing issues
- ☐ Investigated the need for ethical approval

NB firm decisions about style may not need to be taken right now (this could come in stage 4 instead).



The scope, scale and methods you decide to employ in your evaluation will depend to a greater or lesser extent on the resources available to you, in terms of cash, people, time and skills. It is time to start thinking in broad terms about what you can draw upon. You may also be constrained by the demands of funders (to provide certain sorts of information) or because you are involved in a wider programme (which determines what sort of evaluation you need). So certain features of your evaluation may be either imposed or ruled out by circumstances beyond your control, but you should be in a position to exercise some positive choices among the issues outlined below.

2.1 First thoughts about style

It is worth beginning to think about a suitable style of evaluation, and this may involve challenging preconceived ideas. Often the style of an evaluation is related to the location of the service. For example, parenting projects within clinical settings may prefer, or be expected, to adopt a more 'scientific' approach to their evaluation (for example conducted by external evaluators and focusing on standardised tests and quantitative analysis). On the other hand participative or user-led evaluations may be more obviously suited to the values and ethos of voluntary sector organisations. However, it may be appropriate to challenge such assumptions or stereotypes, and to try something a little different. A traditionally person-centred service may benefit from being introduced to standardised tests, quantitative evidence, and systematic monitoring. By contrast, health professionals may welcome the chance to consider their work in a more qualitative way. What would benefit your project or service?

2.2 Involving stakeholders in your evaluation

It is important that evaluation isn't planned or conducted in isolation by a solitary individual – others will need to be involved to a greater or lesser extent.

First you need to define and identify the stakeholders in your evaluation. A stakeholder is anyone with a legitimate interest in the conduct or findings of the evaluation. Draw up a list.

Your 'primary stakeholders' are likely to include sponsors or funders, managers, staff, and parents. Other stakeholders with a less direct or immediate interest in the evaluation may include policy-makers, trustees, volunteers, and children or other family members. Your list may also extend to others such as referring organisations, external evaluators / consultants and potential users of the service.

Second, consider the extent and the ways in which these stakeholders could – or should – be involved in the evaluation. This could be 'active' involvement: steering, managing or carrying out evaluation activities. Or it could be a more 'passive' form of involvement: as a research or evaluation 'subject', or as a recipient of reports. Either way stakeholders will need to be consulted or kept informed.

The extent to which stakeholders become actively involved in the evaluation is largely a question of style – your evaluation will be placed somewhere along the spectrum of 'fully participative' (involving service users at every stage) through to 'independent' evaluation (where the evaluation is in the hands of external contractors).

2.3

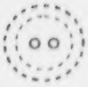
Variety in evaluation

There are many different types of evaluation. Some of the most common approaches are introduced briefly below in order to provide something of a 'taster' for decisions that will need to be made further down the line[1] . These are discussed under three broad headings:
- What aspect of service is being evaluated
- The use or purpose of the evaluation
- Who is involved in the evaluation

What aspect of the service does the evaluation focus on?

There are three broad areas that an evaluation might address:
- the way in which the service operates (process evaluation)
- the effects of the service on users or clients (impact and outcome evaluation)
- how much the service costs (economic evaluation)

These options are not mutually exclusive. It is common to combine approaches, although more emphasis may be given to one aspect rather than another.



Process evaluation

Process evaluation is concerned with the methods and systems of project or service delivery, rather than the effects on participants. It may (if appropriate) focus on operational objectives and whether (and how) they have been achieved. Process evaluation can be particularly useful in the early days of a project. Findings can also be valuable in providing context for impact or outcome data. Process evaluations typically address questions such as:
- What did the service actually provide?
- How?
- Who received it?
- Did it reach the target group?
- Were users satisfied with the service?
- Did it achieve target numbers?
- Did it happen in the way it was meant to?
- If not, why not?
- How could another group replicate this programme?

---

[1] For short descriptions and references to many, many more models and evaluation techniques (nearly 100 listed), see Wadsworth, Everyday evaluation on the run. Full reference in Reading, resources and contacts

Process evaluation: what might be appropriate for us?

All evaluations	Some process element is probably essential Can be particularly useful in evaluating new projects
Basic	A straightforward description of the project (minimum) Collection of monitoring data
Intermediate /advanced	The above, plus: Extent to which objectives were addressed or targets met Gathering views of parents Gathering views of managers and staff Gathering views of children

Outcome or impact evaluation

Outcome evaluation focuses on the effects of the service or programme (on parents, children, or others). An outcome evaluation is necessary in order to demonstrate effectiveness. It will involve the measurement of change in service users, and in order to do this, it is necessary to have some idea in advance of what these changes might be. These could be derived from project objectives (for example "to improve parents' self-esteem", "to improve school attendance"). In order to demonstrate change, baseline data relating to anticipated outcomes will need to be collected at, or before, the start of the programme.

In an ideal world new services would be allowed to get up and running before starting to collect outcome data. Unfortunately such a 'settling down' phase is not always possible; funders and policy-makers sometimes expect evaluations to report at an unrealistically early stage in a project's life.

Outcome evaluations typically address such questions as:

- Did the programme bring about changes in behaviour / attitudes / skills?
- What were the effects on children?
- Who benefited most from the project?
- What were the most successful elements of the programme?

Designing an outcome evaluation can be extremely challenging. In order to be able to attribute change to the project, control or comparison groups are required. It is most suited to established services with clear aims and objectives. Impact evaluation is probably best understood as a 'softer' version of outcome evaluation, in that it is more exploratory and is less likely to involve standardised measures. It will be more reliant on self-report and 'perception' rather than objective measures of change. Impact questions may look more broadly for the effects of a project or programme, including unintended or unexpected effects.

Typical impact questions:
- What were the effects of the programme on parents?
- What was the impact on other family members?
- What did parents find most helpful?

Outcome or impact evaluation: what might be appropriate for us?

All evaluations	It is not necessary to address impact or outcome questions in every evaluation
Basic	Looking at impact may be more appropriate than outcomes Self-reported changes by parents Observations of change made by staff Collection of data on other related indicators (eg school attendance)
Intermediate	Relevant before and after measurements Data collection from a wider range of participants
Advanced	Attribution may be possible at this level if a comparison or control group can be identified. Use of relevant standardised measures, related to project objectives

Economic evaluation

Some evaluations need to include or focus on the costs of services. These may be simple statements of the costs involved in running the service, or slightly more complex calculations relating to 'unit' costs per parent. Alternatively they may involve attempts to answer questions about value for money, which is more complex again in that it requires some agreed criteria for the effectiveness of the project.

Economic evaluation: what might be appropriate for us?

All evaluations	Economic component not always necessary
Basic / intermediate	Service costs, or unit costs
Advanced	Analysis of cost-effectiveness requires that the evaluation also addresses issue of effectiveness, and relates this to unit costs. Cost-benefit analysis will require specialised support.

When are evaluation findings reported and used?

There are two models here –

- continual or regular feedback of evaluation findings (formative evaluation)
- evaluation report as final assessment (summative evaluation)

Formative evaluation

Formative evaluation feeds back findings regularly, enabling changes or improvements to be made to the programme. This style of evaluation is very useful for new and developing services, and is likely to focus mainly on processes. Formative evaluation may be able to provide preliminary evidence relating to impact, but is not appropriate for evaluating outcomes.

Formative evaluation: what might be appropriate for us

All evaluations	Appropriate at any level
Basic / intermediate	Formative evaluation may be particularly appropriate for self-evaluating projects, and those focusing on practice improvement
Advanced	The perspective of an independent evaluator may provide valuable 'distance' in formative evaluation

Summative evaluation

Summative evaluation is more likely to focus on the effectiveness of a project or programme, delivering a final verdict at the end of the evaluation period. Outcome evaluations need to be summative in nature. (If interim findings were fed back during the evaluation, this could cause changes to be made in the programme, which would in turn have implications for the remainder of the evaluation).

Summative evaluation: what might be appropriate for us

All evaluations	Any evaluation can be summative. Outcome evaluations need to be summative. Short-term evaluations are likely to be summative, simply because of restrictions on time.

Who carries out the evaluation?

There is a spectrum of possibilities here. At one end is the completely 'objective, independent' external evaluator. At the other is a model that actively encourages and empowers service users by involving them at a fundamental level in the planning and execution of the evaluation.

Participative / empowerment models
The ethos of the project may well suggest that a participative evaluation would be appropriate, involving parents (and possibly children too). This approach will require some facilitation, either from within the project itself, or using an outside consultant. This can be a time-consuming approach. There will be inevitable limitations on the methods and rigour of the evaluation, but possible gains in ownership and relevance to the needs and interests of parents. If using parents build in the time and resources for training.

Participative / empowerment evaluation: what might be appropriate for us?

Basic	Suitable for basic level evaluations
Intermediate / Advanced	Not really suitable at this level, as parents will almost certainly lack the necessary research skills to fully participate, unless trained

Self-evaluation (could be carried out by a range of stakeholders)
Self-evaluation (or internal evaluation) generally refers to evaluation carried out by project staff and / or management. Other stakeholders may also be involved. Many organisations have to engage in self-evaluation as a necessity – evaluation is required, but there is no additional funding to buy in outside help. While there will be inevitable limitations on what can be achieved (due to limited time and skills), there are nevertheless a number of possible advantages to self-evaluation:

- Cheaper
- Ownership of the process and findings
- Less disruptive, no new faces
- New skills and confidence for those involved
- Knowledge of the territory – a 'first-hand feel' for relevant questions and interpretation of findings

Self-evaluation: what might be appropriate for us?

All evaluations	May be a necessity if time and resources are scarce
Basic / intermediate	Depending on experience and resources available
Advanced	Unlikely to be an option, unless a member of the staff team is particularly experienced in research, and has sufficient time to undertake the evaluation.

The next two options require additional funding. Have you got it? Could you raise it? Again, you may not want to decide now – you may want to explore further what you can and can't do for yourself … but a decision will need to be made around stage 4. If you are thinking about working with external evaluators, read the EXTERNAL EVALUATORS section of the Toolkit now.

Collaborative approaches

Working in collaboration with professional researchers, evaluators or professional partners, can bring in some specialist expertise without incurring the substantial costs of a full external evaluation. There are a number of possibilities, including:

- consultancy around planning and design (for example setting up a monitoring system, designing feedback questionnaires)
- contracting-out certain elements of an evaluation (for example, focus groups, a survey)
- assistance with analysing or interpreting data

Collaborative approaches: what might be appropriate for us?

All evaluations If resources are available, external consultants can enhance evaluation at any level

Independent evaluation

Sometimes this is stipulated, in which case you have no choice (except in who you select as your evaluator). On the other hand you may feel that the objectivity and / or particular skills of a professional evaluator are required, in order to demonstrate the effectiveness of your service. It very much depends on your particular needs and circumstances. It is not a cheap option. Five per cent of a project budget will provide only extremely limited evaluation. However, if you can allocate more than ten per cent you will start to be able to address and find answers to some of the more interesting and challenging questions.

Independent evaluation: what might be appropriate for us?

All evaluations Independent evaluation can be carried out at any level. The budget available for evaluation will be a limiting factor on what can be achieved.

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2.4 Ensuring an ethical approach

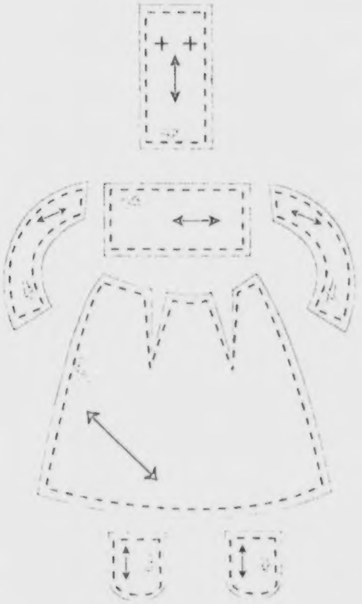
Whatever style or type of evaluation you decide to embark upon, you will want to ensure that you are proceeding in an ethical fashion.
Start planning for this now.

Many researchers and professional evaluators will have signed up to a particular code of ethics, for example those of the Social Research Association (SRA), the British Sociological Association (BSA) or those of other professional bodies. (see READING, RESOURCES AND CONTACTS section for details). At the very least you will need to ensure that the ethical principles and standards employed in the evaluation are consistent with those of your own organisation.

Evaluations of services located in the health sector may need to get advance clearance from an ethics committee, particularly if the evaluation is likely to involve NHS patients, or access to NHS premises or medical records. Find out at an early stage if this is likely to apply to your project, by making an informal approach to your local ethics committee. Contact details for local committees, and other information about ethical review, including application forms, are available from the website of Central Office for Research Ethics Committees (COREC):

http://www.ds.dial.pipex.com/town/green/gqp22/index.htm

Bear in mind that obtaining ethical clearance for your evaluation is likely to add time to the planning and set-up process.



Before moving on, you may wish to note down your thoughts and conclusions:

What kind of broad approach(es) would be appropriate to our circumstances?	
Who are our stakeholders, and how might they be involved in the evaluation?	
What resources can we draw upon (or raise)?	
Do we need ethical approval, and how do we go about obtaining it?	

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stage 3: what do you want to find out?

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Starting point

Having been introduced to some broad approaches to evaluation, and maybe had some ideas about the overall style that would suit your service, it is now time to focus on the detail of exactly what you want your evaluation to tell you. This section takes you step-by-step through the process of designing and refining your evaluation questions. This is a crucial and challenging stage.

Questions to be considered:
- What would we like to find out?
- What do other people need to know?
- What is required from the evaluation?

You may also want to look at:
- GLOSSARY

By the end of this stage you should have:
- Some SMART evaluation questions

Asking the right questions is the key to a useful and satisfying evaluation, so it is well worth investing the time and effort to work through the process outlined below. If possible, try to involve some other stakeholders in the process. Working through these issues together should clarify and enhance understanding of some fundamentals about your project, as well as engaging everyone in the evaluation process.

This is an important phase, not least in ensuring that stakeholders have realistic expectations of what the evaluation is about. Communication, negotiation and consultation should ensure that relevant stakeholders not only have an understanding of the decisions taken, but they should also acquire some ownership of the whole enterprise.

3.1 Who to involve in the process?

Several heads are better than one. Think about how to involve stakeholders. Even if the evaluation is in the hands of external evaluators, project managers should have some involvement in the process. Funders may also need to approve the evaluation questions and methodology. If you are considering a participatory approach, then parents (and/or children) should be involved in drawing up the questions.

There is likely to be a certain amount of discussion, debate and negotiation involved in the process. It may be appropriate to devote a staff meeting or project 'away day' to working on this stage.

3.2 Doing the groundwork

If you have the time (for example if the motivation for evaluation is from within the project, rather than imposed from outside), it is well worth considering revisiting the project's own aims and objectives. Use the Toolkit GLOSSARY to help clear up any confusion between aims and objectives, outputs and outcomes.

In addition to ensuring that objectives are SMART (see table below) and actually reflect the direction and activities of the work undertaken, doing this as a group exercise is a useful way of getting staff, managers (and possibly also parents) involved and on board for the evaluation. Reflecting on the actual work undertaken by the project and discussing possible indicators of success are both vital elements in understanding the evaluative process.

So, how SMART are your objectives? You may well find you need to make some changes. This may be as radical as deleting or adding objectives, or it may simply involve amending the wording slightly.

The SMART test

Specific	Clear, unambiguous, terms all defined
Measurable	Need not be a 'hard' or quantifiable 'measure' but you need some agreement about what would constitute evidence
Achievable	Given the resources available
Realistic	In tune with the scope and scale of the project
Timely or time-based	Specifying when things should happen

The content of your aims and objectives is something that has to be decided at project level. Reflecting on the fundamentals of what the project is trying to achieve (expected outcomes) and how you know when you have been successful (the evidence) will stand you in good stead when it comes to framing appropriate questions, and designing the evaluation itself.

3.3 Making a start

You may already have a fairly clear idea of what you want from the evaluation, or some questions already in mind (which may have been imposed from outside). If this is the case, cut straight to the drafting process (3.4 below).

If you are feeling a bit stuck, one place to start would be with the project's aims and objectives. To what extent are you meeting them? It may not be necessary, desirable or practical to actually address all your objectives in a single evaluation. Instead you could focus on one or two specific objectives, or a particular aspect of an objective.

You may also wish to add or substitute other evaluation questions, which do not derive directly from the aims and objectives. Some suggestions of the issues or areas you might want the evaluation to address are contained in the box overleaf. You will probably be able to add others.

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Possible evaluation themes

Process issues – factors relating to the running of the service
- Delivery of service to parents (how acceptable, enjoyable, culturally appropriate)
- Practical issues (accessibility, convenience, facilities)
- Targeting of particular groups
- Meeting special needs
- Recruitment (publicity, referral systems)
- Attendance and retention
- Relationships with other agencies

Impact/outcome issues – changes you hope to bring about ...
... in parents
- Increased knowledge of child development
- Increased understanding of child's behaviour
- Insight into own behaviour and relationships
- Effects related to meeting other parents – new sources of support, friendship
- Improved mental health (confidence, self-esteem, depression, stress)
- Coping strategies, dealing with conflict, anger
- Changes in behaviour – specific parenting skills and practices (praise, smacking etc)
- Improved attitude to own child or children
- Communication skills
- Improved relationship with child, other family members
- Access to other agencies, social support – benefits, employment, counselling, education etc

... in children
- Changes in behaviour (at home, offending, school attendance etc)
- Improved relationship with parent, other family members

You should have some ideas by now as to what kind of answers you hope your evaluation will provide.

3.4 The drafting process starts here ...

Going through the process outlined opposite (either internally or alongside an external evaluator) will not only pay dividends in ensuring the evaluation delivers what you want, but will give you an early and invaluable insight into the 'evaluative mindset'.

Keep the intended purpose and uses of the evaluation in mind. What will the audience for your evaluation want or expect to see addressed? Remind yourself of your reasons for evaluating, and focus your evaluation questions accordingly.

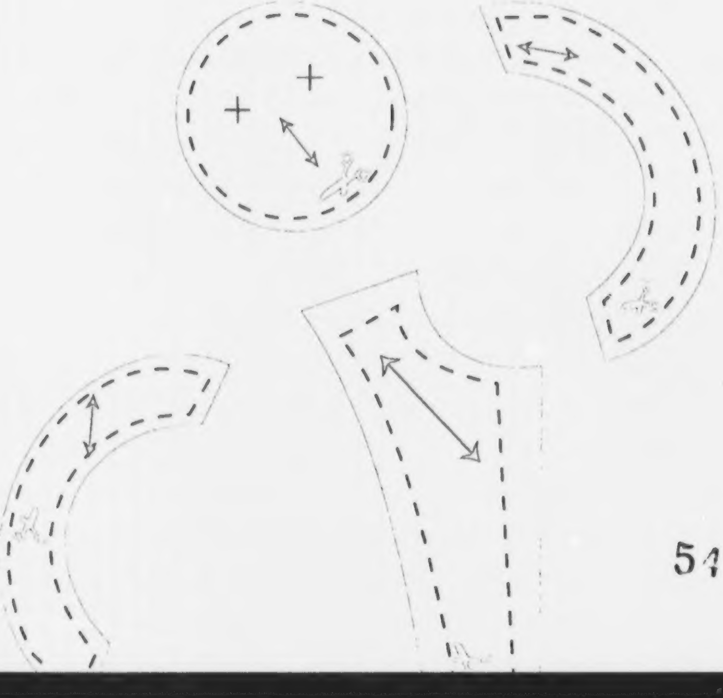
At this stage don't dwell on the practicalities, or methods required to actually answer your questions (this will come later), but think in relatively pure terms about what you would like to find out.

1. Start by brainstorming some evaluation questions. (Your initial attempts may yield questions that are too broad or vague and which will need rethinking and refining later, but don't let this inhibit you at this stage).

2. Now begin to redraft.

- Aim for clear and unambiguous language.
- What would constitute a meaningful answer in each case? What kind of evidence would be required? (Don't worry yet about how to actually go about finding the answers).
- Keep in mind who the evaluation is for. Your questions may be very interesting to you and your colleagues, but how relevant are they to the interests of funders, managers, or policy-makers?

The table below gives some examples of what seem at face-value to be perfectly reasonable questions, but in fact would be very difficult to address in an evaluation. Use this to help you avoid similar pitfalls.



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First draft question	**Commentary**	**Further questions raised, clarification required**
Does the project make a difference?	Needs breaking down into a number of smaller SMARTer questions	• *To whom?* • *What kind of a difference?* • *How much difference?* • *What about unanticipated effects?*
Are we meeting our aims and objectives?	May require groundwork to clarify and sharpen up aims and objectives (see 3.2 above). Each objective may potentially spawn a bundle of related evaluation questions	• *Are your aims and objectives SMART enough to enable evaluation?* • *Is the evaluation timescale realistic (some aims may be very long-term)?* • *Do we really want to address all the aims and objectives?*
Does our parenting programme work?	Seems reasonable on the face of it, but in fact, it is difficult to answer this kind of question. Meanwhile, you can be guaranteed to provoke a lot of internal debate! Unless you have large resources at your disposal, consider focusing down (Use the possible themes table in section 3.3 for ideas)	• *Are we clear what the programme is trying to achieve?* • *How could we tell if it had succeeded?* • *How long should the effects last?* • *Where should we look for effects (parents, children, the next generation, society at large)?*
What are the effects on children?	Your aims and objectives might suggest possible measurable outcomes	• *Particular targeted children, or siblings too?* • *Do you have an idea of intended outcomes for children?* • *Or is this exploratory?* • *Any idea of when effects might become apparent?* • *Or how long they should last?*
Do parents appreciate our service?	Even this apparently straight-forward question requires further unpicking	• *Which parents (all parents, local parents, parents who actually use the service)?* • *In absolute terms, or in comparison with other services?* • *Which bits do they like?* • *They may like it, but is it doing them any good?*
Are we meeting the needs of our client group?	You will need to refine, select and prioritise the questions of greatest interest and urgency	• *Is our client group clearly defined?* • *Is the project reaching this group?* • *Do we know their needs?* • *Which needs is it appropriate for the project to address?* • *How can we tell if a need is met?*

3. Once you have come up with some more manageable questions, try subjecting them to the SMART test too.

Subjecting evaluation questions to the SMART test – some examples

Is the programme being delivered as planned? *(process question)*	Specific?	Assumes you have a particular parenting programme, and standards or guidance for delivery
	Measurable?	If the above is in place, it should be possible to make a judgement about whether programme and standards are adhered to
	Achievable?	No large input of evaluation resources required to address this question
	Realistic?	Even the most basic evaluation could probably realistically address such a question
	Timely or time-based?	Evaluation timing concurrent with project milestones
How acceptable is our programme to parents? *(process question)*	Specific?	May need to specify further (parents who use the service, or parents in general, including those who choose not to use the service?)
	Measurable?	'Acceptability' could be ascertained by asking parents directly, via feedback forms, questionnaires, or interviews. It could also be gauged by collecting and analysing feedback from parents who drop out or fail to attend
	Achievable?	Depends on resources available for the evaluation
	Realistic?	Seems appropriate to almost any parenting project or programme
	Timely or time-based?	Assumes the evaluation is taking place while the programme is actually running, and therefore can access the views of parents
Do participants feel more confident in their role as parents by the end of the programme? *(outcome question)*	Specific?	Quite clear what change is anticipated, for whom and by when
	Measurable?	Self-report or other measures of confidence could be used. Since change is stipulated, it will be necessary to measure at the start and at the end of the programme
	Achievable?	So long as evaluation is planned in advance and baseline level of confidence is measured at the start of the programme
	Realistic?	Assumes that the programme actually addresses issues of parental confidence (reference to this in the aims and objectives?)
	Timely or time-based?	Specifies a time by which the change should have taken place

4. At last … you have arrived at a question or questions. This may be a single, simple, focused question. (It is far better to focus and do a good job of answering one simple question than to spread your net too wide and capture nothing worth having). It may be several related questions, possibly taking the form of one overriding aim for the enterprise, together with a number of more specific evaluation questions. Alternatively, you may have a series of quite discrete questions.

5. Write down your questions in the table below, and note whether they relate to process, impact, outcomes or costs.

Write down your draft evaluation questions

Question	*Process*	*Impact*	*Outcome*	*Cost*

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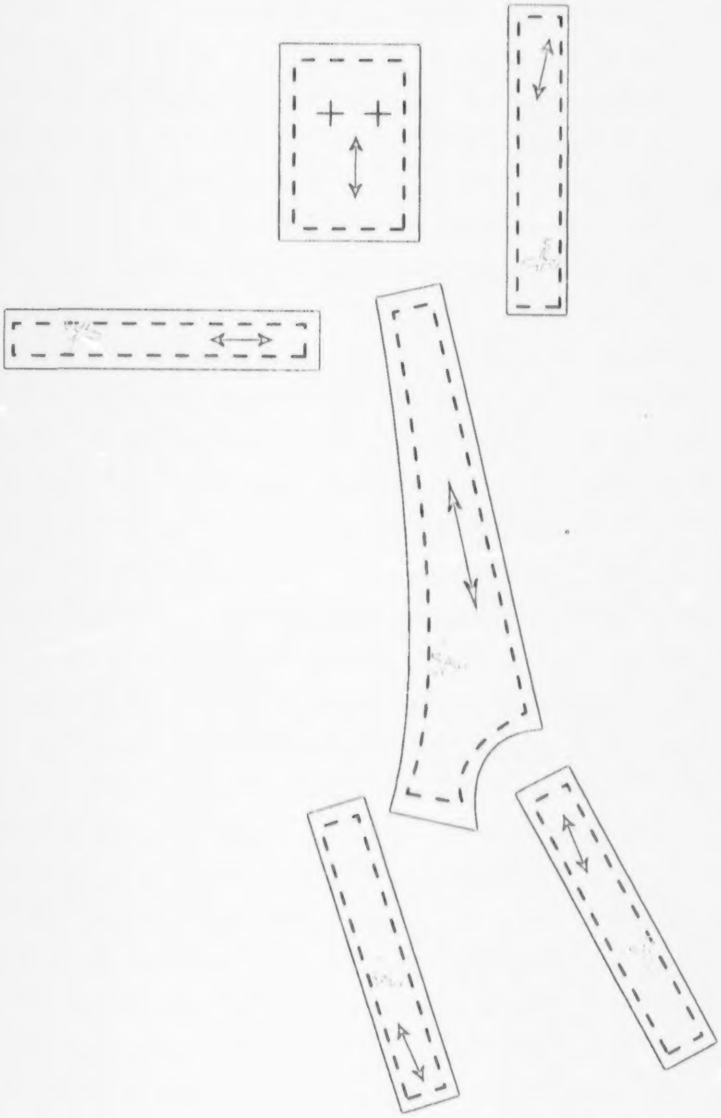
stage 4: evaluation design



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Starting point:

You will now have drafted one or more evaluation questions. Now it is time to consider how they could be answered, informed by your preferred style of evaluation (stage 2) and tempered by practical constraints (time, money, and skills available). The text guides you through the design process.

Questions to be considered:

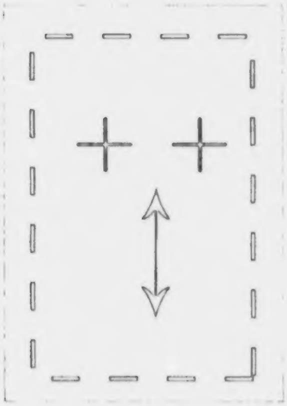
- How can we find answers to our evaluation question(s)?
- What kind of evidence will we need?
- What methods will we use to collect the evidence?

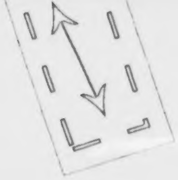
You may also want to look at:

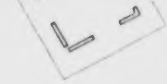
- GLOSSARY
- CASE STUDIES (for examples)

By the end of this stage you should have:

- A practical, efficient and achievable evaluation design, all elements of which are directly related to answering your evaluation question(s)







This section will draw your attention to some key principles and guide you through the decision-making process of designing an evaluation. At this stage you should not be aiming for enormous detail – just a clear idea of what kinds of information need to be collected, and what sort of methods might be suitable. Further information about specific methods of data collection is available at stage 5.

4.1 Constraints on design

Aside from the evaluation questions you drafted at stage 3, and the 'style' preferences you identified at stage 2, the key factors that will have a bearing on the design of your evaluation are the availability of:

- funding
- skills and experience
- time

Funding options

Set amount of funds

There may already be an amount set within the project's budget for evaluation, in which case you will have to work out how and where this is spent, and what kind of evaluation you can 'afford'. If you are considering contracting out some or all of the work, start investigating the likely costs of different options at an early stage.

Applying for funding

You may need to apply for funding for your evaluation, in which case your approach might be to decide what kind of evaluation would meet your needs, and then start totting up what it might cost (either to do it yourself, or to pay for external evaluators). You may find your ideal evaluation turns out to be rather expensive, in which case a less ambitious rethink may be required.

No budget for evaluation

Alternatively, you may be embarking on evaluation on a real shoestring, with no dedicated budget. Be aware, though of what the 'costs' in staff time are likely to be (including administrative or clerical staff). Think long and hard about how much time can reasonably be devoted to evaluation – and then think about what can realistically be achieved within the time you have. Keep it simple.

Skills and experience

If you are 'doing it yourself' you probably have a good idea of what skills you have at your disposal. Bear in mind you may also be able to call upon the skills of colleagues. If you are considering engaging external evaluators or consultants to undertake some or all of the work, then you would be advised to discuss with them your design preferences, or to work through some of the steps in section 4.2 (below) alongside them.

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Time

If you are embarking on self-evaluation you will need to take into account how much time you and your colleagues can spare from your other work to undertake evaluative tasks. Even if you are working with external evaluators, there may still be time costs for you and your staff – processing monitoring data, attending steering groups, or perhaps being interviewed yourself.

For any evaluation, you will also need to consider if there are deadlines to take into consideration, which may have a bearing on certain design features (eg longer-term follow-ups of parents).

4.2 A step-by-step approach to design

Keeping in mind these limitations and constraints, we now move on to the process of designing your ideal evaluation. You will need your evaluation questions to hand.

Make some copies of the blank **DESIGN PLANNING GRID** (opposite) and the **DESIGN SUMMARY** sheet (p.12) to help you work through design issues. The grid is also available on the PESF website www.parenting-forum.org.uk Use the examples for inspiration.

Key principles in designing an evaluation

1. Firstly, whatever your evaluation questions, and regardless of the scope and scale of your evaluation, a basic requirement is some form of project monitoring.

2. If possible, ensure that multiple perspectives are included in the evaluation. This means collecting the views of different stakeholders – for example, including data from parents and facilitators. This will give a more balanced and rounded evaluation.

3. On a similar theme, try to triangulate if resources permit. This means collecting different types of data as evidence. For example, if you want to know if parents find your classes interesting, you can ask parents directly, but also look at attendance figures as another indicator.

1. First, take each of your evaluation questions in turn. The type(s) of evaluation question may naturally imply (or rule out) particular approaches or methods. However, in many cases there will be several possible approaches to the same question. Different 'levels' of complexity, robustness and depth will be possible, depending on what skills and resources are available. Keep a reasonably open mind at this stage. Don't assume that you'll need a questionnaire to parents or a standardised test – be driven by the questions you want answered, not by a preference for a particular method. Just brainstorm the options for now. Be creative. The final decision-making will come a little later.

Design planning grid

Question	Evidence	Source	How to collect	Type of data	When to collect
Consider one evaluation question at a time	Write down what evidence you need to address this question	What are the possible sources for the evidence?	How might you gather the evidence, what methods could you use in each case?[1]	Qualitative, quantitative, or a mixture of the two?	Before the programme, during, at the end, or longer-term follow-up?

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[1] More detailed information about methods can be found in stage 5

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Example 1 – A process question

Question	Evidence	Source	How to collect	Type of data	When to collect
Was the programme implemented according to plan?[2]	Comparison between the plan and what actually happened[3]	Documents relating to the project[4]	Locate, and extract relevant parts	Qualitative	At the start (this information should already exist)
		Monitoring data[5]	Collate relevant data (eg numbers of sessions, numbers of parents, targeted groups etc)[6]	Quantitative	Ongoing, from start
		Management, facilitator perspectives[7]	Interviews or questionnaires? Diaries or logs?[8]	Qualitative	Various options[9]

---

[2] This kind of question is often closely related to the aims and objectives of the project. You may also be interested in the supplementary question 'If not, why not?'

[3] There may be reference to targets (eg number of parents reached) and milestones (eg programme to begin by a particular date)

[4] In order to answer this question, it is necessary to know what the plan was. This could involve looking at minutes of meetings, job descriptions etc

[5] Monitoring data should provide a factual account of what actually happened (dates, numbers of parents attending sessions etc)

[6] You will also need to ensure that your monitoring system includes relevant client information. For example if your programme targets parents with particular characteristics (eg lone parents, Asian women) you will need to ensure that you collect and record relevant information about service users (family structure, ethnic group, languages spoken etc)

[7] The people involved in managing and delivering the programme will have views on what did and didn't happen, and be able to provide possible explanations and reasons for particular decisions taken.

[8] There are several ways of collecting process information from staff. Diaries or logs could form part of a monitoring system, providing a qualitative record of what happened in each session. Interviews or questionnaires could be used to give a more general overview of the programme as a whole.

[9] You may want to conduct interviews at the start and at the end (in order to compare expectations and reality). Or just a retrospective review at the end. A formative approach might require regular checks on project progress. Diaries or logs should be ongoing.

Example 2 – An impact question

Question	Evidence	Source	How to collect	Type of data	When to collect
What were the effects of the group on parents?[10]	Changes for parents as a result of attending the group[11]	Parents (self-report)[12]	Interviews, questionnaires, diaries, focus groups[13]	Probably qualitative[14]	Various options[15]
		Staff / facilitator's view[16]	Interviews, questionnaires, session notes, case files[17]	"	"
		Other family members, including children[18]	Interviews, questionnaires, drawings etc[19]	"	"
		Other professionals involved with the family [20]	Interviews, questionnaires, case notes	"	"
		Other sources?[21]			

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[10] This is an open and exploratory question. Intended and unintended effects may be revealed. These may be negative as well as positive. This kind of exploratory question is useful for pilot projects or basic evaluations.

[11] Since it has not been stipulated in advance what these changes may be, it will not be possible to make before and after 'measurements'.

[12] Even the most basic evaluation should try to include the views of parents.

[13] The methods chosen will depend on your resources, your evaluation questions, and the characteristics of the parents. Conducting individual interviews can be time-consuming, but if parents have literacy or language difficulties, written questionnaires or diaries should be avoided. Focus groups are good for gathering general impressions, but are not the best solution if you want to collect detailed information at an individual level.

[14] This kind of exploratory question is best approached qualitatively, using open questions.

[15] The main point of collection would probably be at the end of the programme. Long-term projects, or formative evaluations may require more regular checks. You may want to consider a longer-term follow-up (eg a few months after the programme finishes).

[16] Staff may also have been able to observe changes in parents. You may want to collect general comments, or detailed information at an individual level.

[17] Some relevant information may be recorded as part of routine monitoring or record-keeping.

[18] Larger-scale evaluations may want to explore changes within the family, including the perspectives of other family members.

[19] If the views of young children are sought, creative methods may be required (using play, drawings etc).

[20] Social workers, health visitors, teachers etc may have observed changes.

[21] Don't just rely on the suggestions provided – think what would be relevant to the circumstances of your programme.

Example 3 – An outcome question

Question	Evidence	Source	How to collect	Type of data	When to collect
Does the programme have a positive effect on parents' self-esteem? (outcome for parents)[22]	Comparison of self-esteem before and after the programme[23]	Parents	Questionnaires, interviews, standardised tests[24]	Quantitative and /or qualitative	Ideally, before and after[25]
		Control group[26]	Standardised tests	Quantitative[27]	"
		Staff, facilitators	Interviews, questionnaires, session notes, case files[28]	Qualitative	Various options
		Other family members, including children	Interviews, questionnaires, drawings etc	Qualitative	
		Other professionals involved with the family	Interviews, questionnaires, case notes, referral form	Qualitative	
		Other sources			

---

[22] An evaluation question focusing on intended outcomes for parents. This may be one of the project's objectives.

[23] It is important that change can be measured in some way.

[24] Standardised tests (for advanced evaluators) are available which measure self-esteem (see 'measures' section of Toolkit). You may also be able to collect self-reported (qualitative) data relating to self-esteem through interviews or questionnaires. Parents could perhaps be asked to describe themselves before and after the programme, or provide examples.

[25] In order to measure change, measurements must be taken at more than one point in time. You may want to consider a further follow-up, in order to see if effects have been sustained.

[26] Advanced designs only, requires statistical skills. A control or comparison group is necessary if positive changes are to be attributed to the programme.

[27] Standardised tests yield quantitative data only.

[28] Observations and examples provided by facilitators could be used as a supplementary source of data.

Example 4 – An outcome question

Question	Evidence	Source	How to collect	Type of data	When to collect
If a parent attends the programme, does this have a positive effect on the behaviour of his/her child(ren)?[29] (outcome for children)	Changes in child's behaviour	Parent (self-report)[30]	Questionnaire, interview, diaries, standardised tests	Quantitative and / or qualitative	Ideally, before and after[31]
		Control group[32]	Standardised tests, monitoring[33]		
		Child[34]	Questionnaire, interview		
		Other family members	Questionnaire, interview		
		Professionals involved with the child or family[35]			
		Observation[36]	Structured or unstructured		
		Monitoring[37]			
		Other	From project, from other sources		

---

[29] An evaluation question focusing on intended outcomes for children. This may be one of the project's objectives. Particular types of behaviour may be specified (eg offending, tantrums etc)

[30] A basic evaluation may find a parent's perception of improvement to be sufficient evidence.

[31] In order to actually measure change, quantitative data needs to be collected before and after. Qualitative accounts of behaviour change can be retrospective only.

[32] We are getting into very advanced and sophisticated designs. Careful consideration would need to be given to the matching of groups in terms of age of children, types and frequency of behaviour etc

[33] Standard measures of child behaviour (as reported by parents) are available. Systems could also be set up to monitor incidences of specific behaviour of relevance to the programme.

[34] Children may be able to provide an interesting perspective on their own behaviour and the reasons for changes.

[35] Including - as appropriate - teachers, youth offending teams, health visitors

[36] Depending on the type of project it may be possible, or appropriate, to directly observe the child's behaviour (in school, in the crèche, in the family setting)

[37] Monitoring the parents attendance at the programme will be important, and could be expected to have a bearing on outcomes. It may also be possible to build monitoring of behaviour 'incidents' into the design of the evaluation (eg exclusions from school, arrests, incidence of certain behaviours in the home).

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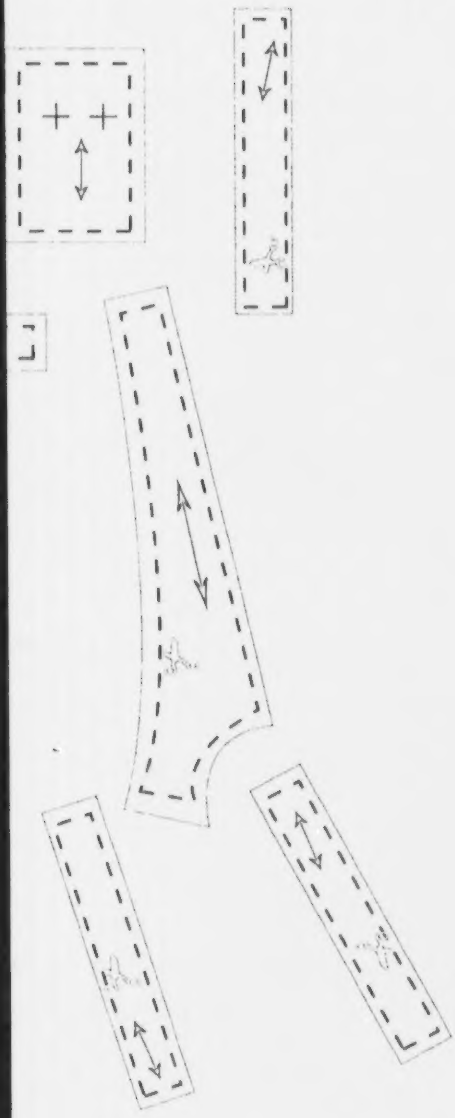

2. When you have done this for all of your evaluation questions, think about what makes most sense for your evaluation, given your preferred style of evaluation, and the 'level' at which you are aiming (basic, intermediate or advanced), and the practicalities involved. Highlight or ring the most likely or appealing options, bearing in mind the key principles at the start of this section (monitoring, triangulation and multiple perspectives).

3. Now, put all the sheets of the grid together (taking in your ideas for all your evaluation questions) and see whether it may be possible to make some 'economies'. For example, you may be able to address more than one of your evaluation questions in a single questionnaire for parents. Try and make your overall design as neat and efficient as possible. You may want to modify or scale down a little. Make sure your design is appropriate to the intensity of service-delivery (you shouldn't be taking an evaluative sledge-hammer to crack a walnut of a project). If you are new to evaluation, you will probably want to start small, with a simple and straightforward design.

4. A final check ...

- Make sure your design will achieve what it needs to. For example, if your funder needs particular figures, make sure they will be collected!
- Check that your chosen design does actually address your agreed evaluation questions. If not, you will have to reconsider either the questions or the design.
- Try thinking about what you hope your evaluation will tell you (fantasise about what a 'good' evaluation report might say), and check back to see if you are taking all the necessary steps to get this result.
- It is also worth exploring those dark corners of dread. What would be the worst-case scenario in terms of findings? Does your design allow for the unthinkable to be unearthed? It should.

5. Summarise your design on the **DESIGN SUMMARY** sheet on page 12. This form is also available on the PESF website www.parenting-forum.org.uk
Use the example opposite as a guide to the kinds of information to record.

Design summary example (BASIC / INTERMEDIATE level)

Source	Method	Summary of content	Qual or quant?	When?
Project	Monitoring system (improved)	Attendance record Parent demographics	Quantitative	Throughout
Facilitators	Programme log (semi-structured)	What worked? What didn't work? Other observations	Qualitative	After every session
Facilitators	Progress forms – structured	Facilitator's assessment of progress made by each parent	Quantitative	End of course
Parents	Parent feedback forms (to include same categories as progress forms filled out by facilitators)	Parent assessment of own progress and views of programme	Qualitative and quantitative	End of course
Parents	Focus group	How programme could be improved	Qualitative	End of course

Design summary sheet

Source	*Method*	*Summary of content*	*Qual or quant?*	*When?*

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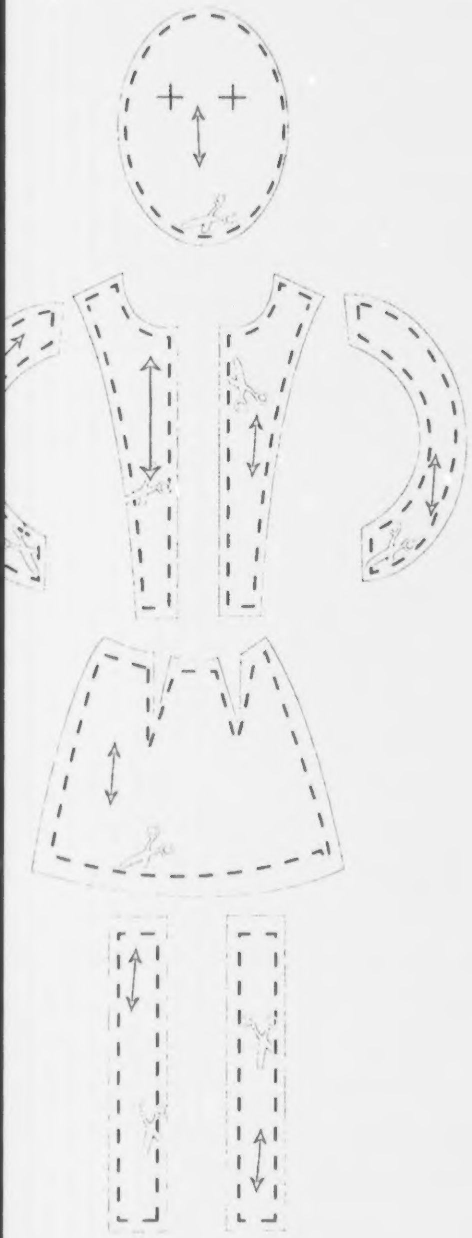
stage 5: methods

PARENTING EDUCATION & SUPPORT FORUM

NATIONAL CHILDREN'S BUREAU
making a difference

Starting point:



Now you have sketched out an ideal design for your evaluation, it is time to consider your proposed methods in more detail. At this stage you need to weigh up the possible advantages and disadvantages of the data collection methods you are considering, and start to design or select suitable tools. You will also need to make decisions about sampling, and ensure that you have given consideration to the ethical implications of your chosen methods.

Questions to be considered:

- What methods would be most suitable?
- How will the data be collected (what tools or instruments are required)?
- What are the ethical implications?

You may also want to look at:

- READING, RESOURCES AND CONTACTS
- MEASURES
- FEEDBACK FORM (as an example of questionnaires)
- GOLDEN RULES

By the end of this stage you should have:

- Finalised your evaluation design
- Selected or designed tools

This part of the Toolkit provides information and advice that will help you to select appropriate methods for your evaluation. This section contains a summary of the key features of the following:

1. Research methods – a broad overview .... (page 4)
2. Monitoring .... (page 6)
3. Questionnaires .... (page 10)
4. Interviews .... (page 14)
5. Focus groups or group interviews .... (page 16)
6. Asking questions .... (page 17)
7. Standardised tests and measures .... (page 19)
8. Other data-gathering techniques .... (page 20)
9. Sample selection .... (page 21)
10. Ethical implications .... (page 22)

Readers requiring additional information or advice on these or other research methods should consult the READING, RESOURCES AND CONTACTS section of the Toolkit.

There are numerous factors to take into account when designing and planning an evaluation. Many an inexperienced evaluator or researcher has hit the rocks by failing to anticipate the full implications of what they have set in motion. So keep the following points in mind as you finalise your data collection plans:

Planning for data

- How much data are you expecting if everything goes according to plan? You may want to consider collecting only from a sample of participants.
- Do you have – or can you access – the skills required to deal with the kind of data you want to collect? For example, if you want to use standardised outcome measures, will you be able to analyse and interpret the data without external support?
- Do you have software that will help you organise your data, for example a spreadsheet or database? (This may not be essential for basic designs).
- How much time will it take to process and organise your data, for example transcribing tapes, writing up notes, or collating information from questionnaires?

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5.1 Research methods – a broad overview

Whether you are doing the evaluation yourself, or working alongside professionals, you will need to have some understanding of the different approaches to collecting and analysing data, and the types of conclusions that can be drawn in each case. Before moving on to discuss particular methods in more detail, a brief overview of the differences between quantitative and qualitative approaches to data collection is set out below.

It is not the case that one method is intrinsically 'better' than another. However certain circumstances or evaluation questions may point towards the use of particular approaches. Both approaches can generate valid and reliable findings (albeit of different types and for different purposes). Equally either type of evaluation, if badly designed, executed, analysed or interpreted can be unhelpful or misleading. In practice, quantitative and qualitative methods are often combined in evaluation.

Quantitative methods

These research methods are, as you would expect, concerned with quantities, or numbers. At their simplest, they are concerned with counting things. Quantitative methods are what you use to answer questions such as 'How many parents attended groups this quarter', or 'What proportion of our clients are members of minority ethnic groups?' or 'Which session in the programme received the highest satisfaction rating?'. Much monitoring data (project inputs and outputs) will thus be quantitative. Other ways of generating and collecting quantitative data include surveys and standardised tests.

Quantitative methods are particularly useful for managing and summarising data relating to larger numbers of cases. You do not need to be a statistician to dip a toe into the shallower waters, although for complex analysis and interpretation, the services of a specialist researcher will be required.

An important feature of any quantitative data collection method, is that data must be collected and recorded in a standardised format. You can only count items if they are of the same type. Therefore your data collection methods must make this possible. The process can be simplified by deciding the categories in advance: the person filling in the form simply ticks the appropriate box, and the person collating the data counts up the responses in each category. Certain assumptions will need to be made about what the categories should be, and there may be exceptional cases that do not easily 'fit' the pre-determined categories. However, when quantitative data is required this is the most efficient way to collect and analyse it. What you lose in subtlety of description, you make up for in accuracy of numbers.

Quantitative methods are often favoured, or believed to be favoured, by funders and managers. Sometimes numerical data is described as 'hard data' with the implication that it is more objective, valid or robust. Those involved in practice on the other hand can resent having their work 'reduced' to a series of broad categories and numerical responses.

Quantitative methods, in summary

- The only practical way to include large numbers of subjects in your evaluation
- Provide a broad, descriptive summary of the activities and outputs of a project
- Depending on the sample used and the response rate, findings can be generalised more widely
- Offer little in the way of explanation or interpretation of findings
- Unable to reflect the complexity of personal experience

Qualitative methods

Qualitative research methods are concerned with exploring, explaining and understanding. While quantitative data consists of numbers, qualitative data will usually consist of words. Social experience is complex and cannot easily be reduced to a number or a tick in a box, or when it can, often this only tells part of the story. Qualitative data can be used to supplement the stark summaries provided by quantitative data by providing answers to questions such as 'How can we explain the seasonal variation in attendance?' or 'What are the particular needs of Bangladeshi parents?' or 'What is it about certain sessions that particularly appeals to parents?' or 'How has the relationship between parent and child changed?'. Qualitative data can bring a subject to life, in the way that a string of figures cannot. If for example, parents particularly rated a role-play session, some quotes explaining why they found it so useful and enjoyable will help to illuminate this finding.

Qualitative data is by nature unstructured. The most common way of getting such information is by the use of open-ended questions. This allows people to respond in their own terms, using their own language, and revealing what is important to them. Such questions often begin with 'How', 'What' or 'Why', and may have follow-up questions which may probe more deeply.

Qualitative research is less well understood than quantitative research, and believed by some to be intrinsically 'soft'. Those involved in service delivery are often more receptive to qualitative evaluation as it is able to capture some of the subtlety, complexity and individual perspectives of their work.

Qualitative methods, in summary

- Acknowledge and reflect the complexity and uniqueness of personal experience
- Offer insight and understanding into behaviour and processes
- Ideal for focusing on the views and experiences of small sub-groups
- Findings can provide powerful insight into how things operate here and now
- Add rich and readable 'human interest' into an evaluation report
- Cannot be generalised beyond the immediate setting,

5.2 Monitoring

All evaluations should be underpinned by some form of systematic project monitoring, no matter how simple. A useful monitoring system is fundamental to any project or programme, and should really be in place whether or not an evaluation is taking place. It is worthwhile therefore setting up a system that will serve the ongoing needs of the project as well as the immediate needs of the evaluation.

What is a monitoring system?

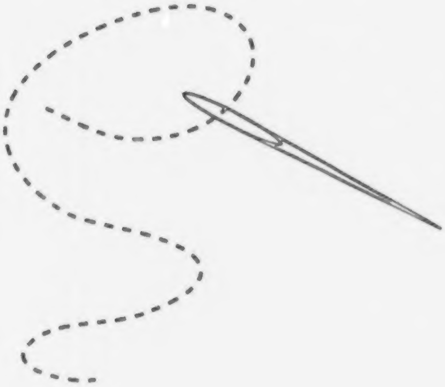
A monitoring system should be able to supply basic summary information about the progress of a project. Such a system need not be complex – but it should be able to supply answers to questions such as:

- How many parents did we see?
- What ages were their children?
- What was the attendance rate for the parenting course?
- How many information packs did we give out?
- How many of our clients are lone parents?
- How many parents failed to complete the programme?

Often projects are expected to provide this kind of information regularly either to managers or funders. It should be collected on a routine basis, not in a panic at the end of the process (when it will be too late to fill in any gaps). Most monitoring information is quantitative.

What monitoring data might you want to collect?

Consider the expectations of managers or funders, and make sure that you start to routinely collect the required data in a useable and readily accessible format. In addition, consider what other information you might need in order to address your evaluation questions.



Some suggestions for monitoring data collection:

About the parenting programme or course:

- Relevant dates (for example, programme start and finish dates)
- Number of sessions delivered by facilitators / details of staff caseload
- Details of sessions – content and /or particular resources used, timing and venue
- Attendance registers or records

About clients/service users:

- Who is involved – details could include (as appropriate):
  - Age
  - Gender
  - Special needs or disabilities
  - Ethnicity
  - Number and ages of children
  - Family structure (for example whether lone parent or step-parent)
  - Neighbourhood
  - Economic or employment circumstances
- How they become involved or hear about the programme
- Reasons for referral
- What service(s) they receive
- How their involvement ends (case closed, referred elsewhere, dropped out)
- The Data Protection Act requires that parents be informed of information held on them on computer. A record of consent to release details for research or evaluation purposes should be kept (external evaluators may need to access records or contact parents directly)

Don't collect data just for the sake of it – this will only create unnecessary work for those involved. Be clear why you need to collect each item, and how the data will be used.

Ethnic monitoring

Ethnicity is a broad term and can be defined in terms of place of birth or country of origin, it can be used to describe colour of skin /appearance, it may denote a religious affiliation e.g. Jewish or cultural allegiance as in identifying oneself as Gaelic and some individuals may categorise themselves according to a particular language.

Ethnicity is a complex concept and ethnic monitoring a sensitive and sometimes controversial issue. Nevertheless, you are likely to need to collect some data relating to the ethnic group and cultural background of parents, either specifically for the evaluation, or as part of an ongoing monitoring system. This will be every bit as important for projects working with very few parents from minority ethnic groups, as for those with a more diverse user population. In addition to gathering data for funders or managers, you may want to know how representative your users are of the local population, or wish to have a better understanding of the specific cultural make-up and needs of the parents accessing the project.

In order for information about ethnicity to be useful in a monitoring context, it needs to be collected in a consistent format. This enables trends and changes over time to be analysed. And if you want to compare your data with that from other sources, you will need to ensure that you are using the same categories. If in doubt, using the latest version of the ethnicity question from the census is a safe bet.

The ethnic categories used for the last census in England in 2001 are available from the National Statistics Office at www.statistics.gov.uk and the CRE (Commission for Racial Equality) at www.cre.gov.uk has produced an expanded ethnic monitoring form.

- individuals have the right to refuse to answer a question on ethnicity so the 'I do not wish to say' option is important
- give a full explanation on how the data from ethnic monitoring will help ensure all sections of the population are currently receiving parenting support services or will benefit from planned improved services
- guessing ethnicity – from names or appearance – will give you inaccurate data and is not recommended
- if you know of a high concentration of specific groups locally who are not mentioned on the standard ethnic monitoring forms above, you might need to expand your own form

For your own purposes, you may want to collect additional information about the parents' background and culture, for example: country of birth, language(s) spoken, religion.

Of course, there are other approaches to gathering information about ethnicity, each having its advantages and disadvantages. No system is perfect, or appropriate for every occasion. For example, the use of open questions, allowing people to describe their ethnicity in their own terms makes sense when an in-depth understanding of individual background and self-concept is important, but such an approach will not yield data that can be easily collated, compared or used for monitoring purposes.

How might you collect monitoring data?

Some of this data, and systems for collecting and recording it, will probably already be in existence. However, it may not be routinely or systematically collected at present. Nor may it be easy to access or collate. You may well find that you need to collect additional data, or amend existing recording systems, or set up new procedures. Occasionally it is easiest to start again from scratch. But don't discard all your existing procedures without carefully reviewing them first.

Information about clients or service users

- What background information is collected and in what form?
- How is information recorded on case files?
- Do you have a database, and if so, what information is recorded on it?
- How structured is paperwork associated with referral or assessment – does it contain some predetermined categories, or is it all open-ended questions?
- Which bits of information are essential to the monitoring process?

Information about the project

- Are attendance registers kept?
- What kind of records of sessions are kept by facilitators or other project staff – structured format, or informal notes?

Reviewing your existing systems

What you are aiming for are methods of recording and collecting information that are structured, standardised and systematic. Some changes will be simple to implement (for example, asking parents to sign in at drop-in sessions), others may take more time and effort (moving towards a more structured referral form). Often one 'tool' can do several jobs, if carefully constructed. For example elements of a referral form, or an assessment tool can also be used for an evaluation. It just requires a bit of co-ordination and streamlining.

Implementing effective monitoring systems

It should be apparent by now that effective monitoring is about more than just creating tools for collecting information, it is about creating workable systems. In order to ensure monitoring data is accurate and complete, it is important to double-check that all the systems put in place will actually work in practice. A number of different individuals may be involved in the process. Again, problems will be minimised if those involved in actually collecting and accessing the data (including administrative staff) have been involved in earlier discussions.

If new or special systems are being established in order to collect data about the programme and its participants, consider the following:

- Keep systems simple and user-friendly
- Ensure those responsible for collecting (or collating) the data know who they are, have been fully briefed and understand the purpose and importance of the exercise
- Consider producing a written protocol outlining how, and by whom, data is recorded and transferred from one place to another for the purposes of the evaluation. This will come into its own when there are staff changes.
- Make sure the start date for implementing the new system is known.

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5.3 Questionnaires

What we mean by 'questionnaire' in this context is any form of self-completion document used in an evaluation.

Pros and cons of questionnaires

Pros	Cons
Cost-effective way of reaching large numbers of people	Assumes a certain level of literacy
Allows respondents to feed their views back anonymously	Can seem impersonal and restrictive
Ensures that all respondents are being asked the same questions, in the same way	Different respondents may interpret the questions in different ways
Generates data that is relatively easy to process and analyse (depending on how structured the questions are).	May require more time and effort at the design stage than some other options.

What kind of questionnaire would be appropriate? (See overleaf)
The principal way in which questionnaires vary is according to how structured they are.

Structured questionnaires contain questions with pre-determined responses that can be selected by ticking a box or putting a ring round a number:
- Easy to complete (don't require any writing)
- Generate quantitative data
- Take more time at the design stage
- Easy to analyse
- Useful if dealing with large numbers

Semi-structured questionnaires consist of open questions. Respondents write in their own answers in as much or little detail as they wish.
- Require a certain level of literacy or confidence in writing
- Generate qualitative data
- Quicker and easier to design than structured questionnaires
- Time-consuming and difficult to deal with large numbers of responses
- Respondents may not interpret the questions correctly
- Can be a good way of getting the views of staff (small numbers of literate respondents)

Suitable questionnaires for different levels of evaluation

Basic

If you want to collect data from large numbers of respondents, go for a simple but structured questionnaire. The data you get will be easy to process and analyse. You don't want lots of open-ended responses to deal with.

If you are dealing with small numbers of respondents, consider a mixture of questions – some structured and some open-ended. This will give you both qualitative and quantitative data – useful for very simple evaluations.

Intermediate

See guidelines for basic evaluations above.

Also, note that if you wish to measure change (before-after design) you will need to ensure that the questions concerned are not only identical, but structured, in order that responses can be compared.

Advanced

All of the above applies.

At this level, very complex and highly structured questionnaires may be appropriate, possibly incorporating standardised tests (see for example CASE STUDY 9). This will require specialised skills both at the design and the analysis stage.

Compiling a questionnaire

Compiling even the simplest questionnaire is probably more difficult than you imagine – it will almost certainly take longer than you expect, and you may go through many drafts. This is especially true for highly structured, pre-coded questionnaires. However, in this case, the payoff comes at the analysis stage – there will be less in the way of data preparation and coding to be done.

The process - how to go about it

- It is not always necessary to reinvent the wheel. Look for examples of questionnaires or questions that have been used before, but make sure that they are relevant for your particular circumstances, and that they are well-designed themselves!
- Two (or more) heads are better than one in refining a questionnaire or developing a topic guide
- Don't try and complete it in one session. Questionnaires definitely benefit from being 'slept on' and looked at afresh.
- Pilot your questionnaire – if possible try it out on a few people. Ideally these should not just be colleagues or friends, but people similar to your eventual sample. This will help you ensure that your questionnaire is understood by and acceptable to respondents. Be prepared to make amendments following the pilot.

Content – what to include

- Keep reminding yourself what evaluation question(s) your questionnaire should be addressing. It is all too easy to include a myriad of questions that, although interesting, are not strictly speaking essential to the evaluation.
- Sometimes it can be helpful if the questionnaire is set out with specific headings, with relevant questions grouped under each (eg "About you and your family", "About the parenting programme" "Next steps …"). This helps the compiler to ensure that no vital areas are overlooked, and also may assist respondents in completing the questionnaire. Can be a good starting point, and a reminder of the subjects relevant to your evaluation questions …

Structure – what goes where

- Consider what preamble information might be necessary (the purpose of the survey, what to do with completed questionnaires, confidentiality issues)
- Start with easy questions to allow respondents to 'warm up'
- Include concise instructions and guidance for respondents (for example, how many boxes to tick, where to write the answer)
- If possible avoid too many filters and complicated routing from question to question, but where it is unavoidable, make sure that instructions are clear
- Keep it simple and relevant. Most first drafts are far too long.

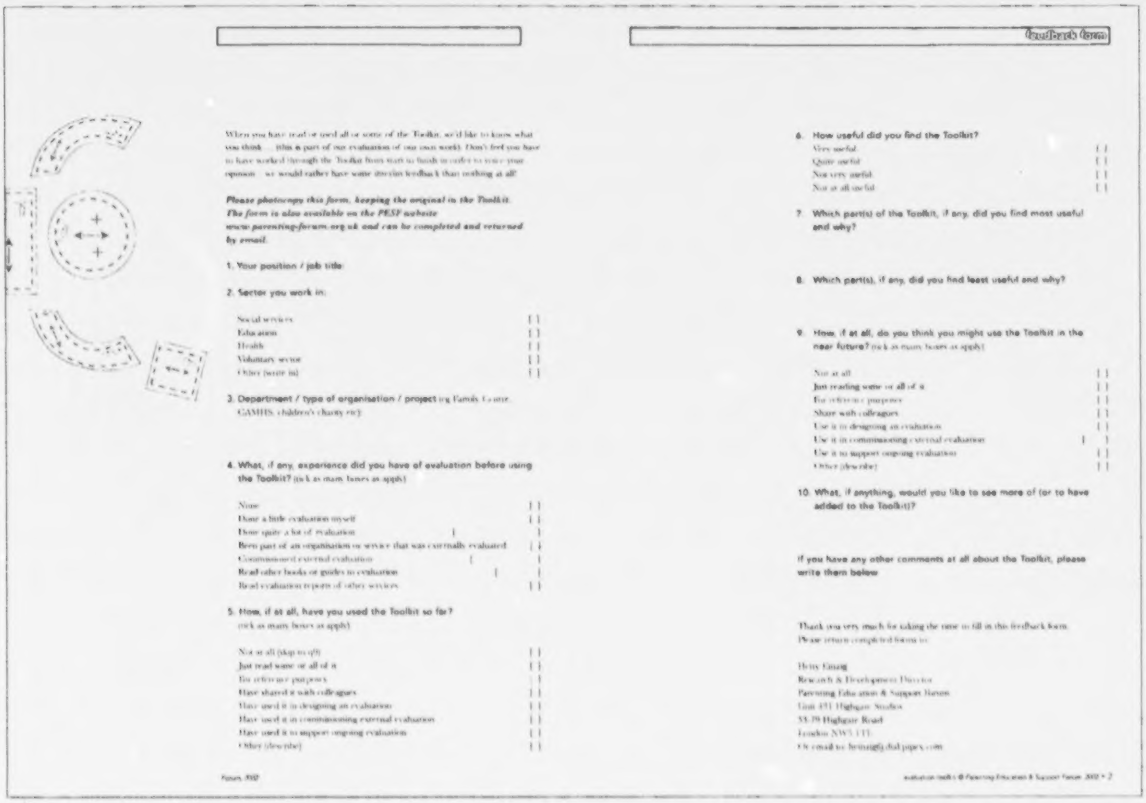
When you think you have finished, check again. What assumptions are being made? Are you missing any 'Emperor's Clothes' questions: so 'obvious' or taken for granted that everyone has forgotten to ask? Check all questions for relevance to your evaluation questions.

Many projects will be working with parents who are not confident in reading or writing English, either because of a lack of literacy, or because English is an additional language. Project staff will probably be the best judge of what particular parents will be able to cope with, and will be able to take this into account when designing tools for self-evaluation. Consider whether the same techniques you use in delivering parenting support to such parents can be employed to make the evaluation more accessible.

- Parents could use numerical scales, or visual representations to respond to questions which are read aloud
- Bilingual parents could be used as translators
- Keep the language very simple
- Avoid open-ended questions in written questionnaires
- Avoid written questionnaires altogether (although the alternatives may be more costly)

It should not simply be assumed that questionnaires ought to be translated into relevant community languages. For one thing this could be an expensive and time-consuming option. More importantly, parents may not be literate in their mother tongue.

It is vital that external evaluators are made aware of relevant language and literacy issues at the earliest possible opportunity



feedback form

When you have read or used all or some of the Toolkit, we'd like to know what you think … (this is part of our evaluation of our own work). Don't feel you have to have worked through the Toolkit from start to finish in order to voice your opinion – we would rather have some interim feedback than nothing at all!

Please photocopy this form, keeping the original in the Toolkit. The form is also available on the PESF website www.parenting-forum.org.uk and can be completed and returned by email.

1. Your position / job title:

2. Sector you work in:

Social services [ ]
Education [ ]
Health [ ]
Voluntary sector [ ]
Other (write in) [ ]

3. Department / type of organisation / project (eg Family Centre, CAMHS, children's charity etc):

4. What, if any, experience did you have of evaluation before using the Toolkit? (tick as many boxes as apply)

None [ ]
Done a little evaluation myself [ ]
Done quite a lot of evaluation [ ]
Been part of an organisation or service that was externally evaluated [ ]
Commissioned external evaluation [ ]
Read other books or guides to evaluation [ ]
Read evaluation reports of other services [ ]

5. How, if at all, have you used the Toolkit so far?
(tick as many boxes as apply)

Not at all (skip to q9) [ ]
Just read some or all of it [ ]
For reference purposes [ ]
Have shared it with colleagues [ ]
Have used it in designing an evaluation [ ]
Have used it in commissioning external evaluation [ ]
Have used it to support ongoing evaluation [ ]
Other (describe) [ ]

Forum 2002

6. How useful did you find the Toolkit?

Very useful [ ]
Quite useful [ ]
Not very useful [ ]
Not at all useful [ ]

7. Which part(s) of the Toolkit, if any, did you find most useful and why?

8. Which part(s), if any, did you find least useful and why?

9. How, if at all, do you think you might use the Toolkit in the near future? (tick as many boxes as apply)

Not at all [ ]
Just reading some or all of it [ ]
For reference purposes [ ]
Share with colleagues [ ]
Use it in designing an evaluation [ ]
Use it in commissioning external evaluation [ ]
Use it to support ongoing evaluation [ ]
Other (describe) [ ]

10. What, if anything, would you like to see more of (or to have added to the Toolkit)?

If you have any other comments at all about the Toolkit, please write them below

Thank you very much for taking the time to fill in this feedback form.
Please return completed forms to:

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Questionnaire design – an example: Toolkit Feedback Form

As an example of a questionnaire, take a look at the Feedback form in the **CORE DOCUMENTS** *section of this Toolkit. We're not claiming that this is a perfect example, but it does illustrate some of the issues raised above.*

First of all it is worth considering what the purpose of the questionnaire is (all questions should be directed towards this end). In this instance we have included a Feedback form with the Toolkit because we need to know how the Toolkit is being used, by whom, and how it can be improved in future.

For a self-completion questionnaire, it is important that respondents have some idea of what the questionnaire is about and why they should fill it in. The first few questions are relatively straightforward and uncontroversial. It is often a good idea to start your questionnaire with routine 'easy' questions that the respondent will have no difficulty or qualms about answering. From our point of view, the first three questions supply important information about users of the Toolkit. Parenting education and support projects are very diverse, and we would like to know who is using the Toolkit, and in what kinds of organisation.

Questions 1 and 3 *are open-ended. It is likely that, back at the office, responses to these questions will be coded into broad categories in order to make the data more manageable (eg manager, project worker, research officer, trainer for question 1).*

Question 2 *is pre-coded, in that we have included what we feel are the major response categories. However, we suspect that these will not cover all users of the Toolkit, so we have included an 'other' category. Note that we have asked respondents to write in what 'other' means in their case. Back at the office, we may use this information to create new categories; alternatively if there are only a few 'other' responses, and these are very diverse, we may decide that this is inappropriate.* ***Question 4*** *is another pre-coded question. We wanted to know what kinds of previous experience readers were bringing to the Toolkit, as this may have a bearing on their reactions. Note that the wording of the question ('if any') does not assume any prior experience, and we use this and similar formulations in several questions. We haven't included an 'other' category with this question, as we are fairly confident that all possible responses have been covered.*

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Question 5 *contains a filter, which directs some respondents to miss out a batch of questions irrelevant to their circumstances. Responses to* ***Question 5*** *and* ***Question 9*** *can be compared directly as the categories have virtually the same wording (only the tense changes). However, we are likely to give more weight to q5; reported actions are likely to be a closer reflection of what actually happens than are statements of intention.*
Question 6 *is an example of a scale, commonly used in questionnaires. We used an even number of points in this case, as we want people to come down on one side or the other of the useful/not useful divide.*
Questions 7, 8 and 10 *have been left very open, leaving respondents free to write as much or as little as they wish.* ***Question 10*** *has been included so that we can address any major gaps (in the eyes of users) when the Toolkit is updated.*

Finally, we have allowed room for respondents to add additional comments or observations. The relatively narrow focus of this feedback questionnaire may not have addressed important issues for our respondents. This is their opportunity to communicate with us in entirely their own terms.

Key points

- The questionnaire is quite short
- It doesn't look crowded on the page
- There is enough space to write answers in, but not an intimidatingly large expanse
- Questions are numbered for easy reference
- It includes instructions for completion (how many boxes can be ticked, which question to answer next)
- Respondents are told what to do with the questionnaire when it has been completed
- There is a deadline for returning the questionnaire.

5.4 Interviews

What is meant by interviews here is any one-to-one spoken questioning that takes place in the context of the evaluation. Interviews can be highly structured (using a complex interview schedule) or very unstructured (depth interviews). The level of formality can also vary.

Pros and cons of one-to-one interviews

Pros	Cons
Useful way of gathering the views of those who have difficulties with written English (language, literacy, young children)	Can be a time-consuming or expensive option
More personal than a questionnaire	Implications for confidentiality
Opportunity to probe more deeply into individual experience and attitudes	Qualitative data can be difficult to process and analyse without specialist skills

What type of interview?

This will depend on the purpose of the interview, and the type of data required.

Highly structured interviews are used to gather quantitative data on complex matters. The interviewer follows a set script, and the interviewee will select answers from lists of pre-determined responses.

- Generates quantitative data
- Maybe required format for some standardised tests
- Allows for statistical analysis
- Interviewers may require special training
- Expensive and time-consuming at the design and data collection stage

Semi-structured interviews consist of a list of standard questions, which interviewees can answer in their own terms. The interviewer will either take notes or tape-record the interview.

- Generates qualitative data
- Some comparability of responses possible
- Relatively easy to design an interview schedule
- Does not require special expertise
- Can be carried out over the phone if necessary
- Analysis can be time-consuming if large numbers of interviews

Unstructured (or depth) interviews cover a pre-determined list of themes or topics. However, there are no set questions, and no required order for topics to be visited. The object of a depth interview is to gain a full understanding of the interviewee's experiences, attitudes or beliefs. Interviews typically last for around 90 minutes and will usually be tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

- Generates (large amounts of) qualitative data
- Requires expertise in interviewing and analysis
- Time-consuming and expensive
- Allows for variety of experiences and views to be explored in depth

Suitable interviews for different levels of evaluation

Basic / Intermediate	Without access to specialist research skills, you would be strongly advised to stick to a semi-structured interview format
Advanced	External evaluators with appropriate skills or training may be able to undertake highly structured interviews (for example relating to standardised tests) and analyse the resulting data. Those with an expertise in qualitative research will be able to conduct and analyse depth interviews.

5.5 Focus groups or group interviews

A focus group in this context should perhaps be more properly described as a 'group interview' or 'group discussion'. (A focus group proper usually involves bringing together people who did not previously know each other in order to discuss a particular topic; this is unlikely to be the case in evaluations of parenting projects).

This method consists of a facilitated session in which questions are asked of the group, and responses discussed. The session can be more or less structured, according to the specific requirements of the evaluation. It may, for example, be appropriate to have a set schedule of questions. On the other hand a less structured, exploratory format may be indicated. In either case, a focus group should not be seeking consensus – it should draw out and explore a range of views.

Group interviews – key features
- Generate qualitative data
- Discussion will need to be recorded (either on tape, or using a note-taker)
- Facilitation skills required in order to structure and manage the discussion

Pros and cons of using group interviews

Pros	Cons
Efficient way of gathering data from more than one respondent	Not an appropriate method for exploring individual experience
Good way of getting deeper into a subject	Some respondents may feel shy speaking up in a group setting
More informal than a one-to-one interview	May be difficult to maintain a distinction between the focus group and 'regular' parenting sessions
Group members will be able to raise issues of concern to them	Group dynamics may interfere with the process

5.6 Asking questions

Whatever methods you select, you are likely to be asking questions at some point in your evaluation. There are several general principles involved in framing questions and these apply equally to questions in questionnaires or interviews.

Well-framed questions:

- Questions should be as short and simple as possible
- Language should be clear and unambiguous
- Avoid double questions (eg "Did you enjoy watching and discussing the video?")
- Questions should not lead respondents towards a particular answer (eg "Do you agree that …")
- On the whole, stick to questions about people's own experience (not asking them to speculate about others or people in general)
- Some hypotheticals can be useful (eg "if you were in charge …", "what would you say if …?"). Bear in mind, though, that what people say they do may not always be the same as what they actually do.
- It should always be clear what kind of answer is required (give instructions or examples if necessary

Depending on the type of data you are after, make sure your questions are open or closed (as appropriate). For example, consider the following ways of trying to find out what had been learned in a particular session:

A: "Did you learn anything in the session today?"

If included in a semi-structured questionnaire, a closed question such as question A would typically generate answers such as 'yes' or 'no'. It is not clear whether the questioner wants to know what has been learned. Some respondents might go on to provide additional information, but this is not implied in the question.

To make things easier for the respondent you could structure your questionnaire in order to specify a range of possible responses, for example:

Yes [ ]   No [ ]   Don't know [ ]

Alternatively you could use a simple scale such as:

a lot [ ]   a little [ ]   nothing at all [ ]

In an interview situation, you would be able to follow up a positive response with a question such as "What did you learn?", but in a questionnaire you can't be so flexible. So, if you do want to know what has been learned, you need to ask explicitly, perhaps by using a question like B:

B: "What, if anything, did you learn in the session today?"

Question B, as it stands, is an open question, and allows respondents to reflect upon their experience and answer in their own terms, though parents who lack confidence in writing may not answer open questions as fully as others, or may avoid referring to anything that is difficult to spell. Open questions will yield qualitative, and probably very varied data. Sometimes this will be exactly what you want – if you really want to understand what parents felt that they learned, even though this may not reflect the learning objectives of the course ("I learned that the toilets are on the 3rd floor", "I learned that this kind of course isn't my cup of tea" etc) – then, fine, open questions are the way forward.

However, you may want to know how far the specific learning objectives of the session were met. In which case a more structured approach might be more appropriate. (By including an open 'other' category, you also allow respondents to express their own idiosyncracies). Such a solution in a questionnaire might look like C below:

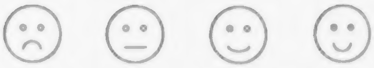
C: "What, if anything, did you learn in the session today?"
Tick as many boxes as you need

Why my baby cries [ ]
Ways of coping with crying [ ]
When to call a doctor [ ]
Other things (please say what) [ ]

Another extremely useful type of question is one that can be responded to by indicating a point on a scale, for example question D:

D: "How confident do you feel about coping when your baby cries for no apparent reason?"

Not at all confident 1 2 3 4 5 very confident



As long as respondents know what the two extremes are (which is high and which is low), this kind of question can be a quick and easy one to respond to. If repeated at different points in time, such questions can be used to measure change. It is also a format that lends itself easily to being read aloud to parents who are less confident in reading English. You could use symbols instead of numbers (a series of faces from miserable through to happy, for example).

Decide whether you need to have a central 'neutral' point, or whether you want to force people to come down on one side or the other.

Another useful technique is to provide statements to agree or disagree with. This can be less invasive than asking parents direct questions. Take care in framing them, though. It is important that they are unambiguous. For example:

E: "It is never acceptable to leave a baby to cry, even for a few minutes"

Agree [ ]   Disagree [ ]

You could also use a more extended scale, including 'strongly' agree / disagree.

5.7 Standardised tests or measures

A large number of different 'measures' exist which have been developed, tested and validated in similar previous studies. Such measures can be used to assess change over time and many are relevant to the parenting field. They usually consist of highly structured sets of questions, which may be administered in an interview setting or designed for self-completion by parents and/or children (as appropriate).

Test and measures – key features

- Highly structured questionnaire/interview format
- Generate quantitative data (usually)
- Generally valid and reliable – that is they can be trusted to measure what they say they are measuring
- May require special skills or training to administer and/or analyse
- Possible to incorporate into a more general interview or questionnaire

Pros and cons of using standardised measures

Pros	Cons
Validity and reliability – 'tried and tested' methods	Format may be experienced as intimidating
Objective measure of change providing 'hard' evidence	Some tests may not have been standardised for use with a range of cultural groups
Comparable data	Sometimes a copyright fee is payable

What type of measure would be appropriate?

There is more information about some standard outcome measures, including where and how they can be accessed in the **MEASURES** table in the **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES** section of the Toolkit. Those conducting 'basic' level evaluations should proceed with caution.

5.8 Other data-gathering techniques

We have covered the most usual ways of gathering data for small-scale parenting projects. There are of course numerous other possibilities including:

Observation

This could include observation of parents' interactions with their child (particularly for parents of younger children), and could be more or less structured, according to the needs of the evaluation and the skills of the evaluator.

If the child's behaviour is a focus of the evaluation, it may be appropriate to observe the child in a school or play-group setting.

An external evaluator may observe the parenting programme in practice, possibly to assess the extent to which it is being delivered according to the stated plan or manual.

Documentary analysis

A process evaluation will need to refer to documentary sources such as project grant bids, job descriptions, minutes of meetings, annual reports and so on. These can provide a useful record of events.

Collecting other types of data

It may be appropriate to use diaries kept by staff or parents for the purpose of the evaluation, or videos, photos, letters, pictures and so on … Any of these could be included as elements in an evaluation, although they may raise some thorny issues of analysis and interpretation. Such data is probably best regarded as evidence to be used in support of that gathered more systematically (for example, by using questionnaires or interviews). Remember that evaluation is primarily about planned data collection, so try to decide in advance what would kinds of data it would be appropriate to include.

5.9 Sample selection

For most basic evaluations of small-scale parenting projects, issues of sampling simply won't arise – the evaluation will involve all parents associated with the project during a particular time-frame.

However in certain circumstances it may not be possible to include everybody – for example if your service is in contact with large numbers of parents (eg a telephone helpline), or if the methods employed by the evaluation are particularly time-consuming or expensive (eg depth interviews), you may need to consider selecting a sample.

A simple rule of thumb:

- If you are collecting quantitative data you should do your best to select a random sample.
- If you are collecting qualitative data, random sampling is not necessary.

There are many different ways to select a sample. This is probably the best known – but it is not appropriate in every situation.

Random sampling

Random sampling means that everybody has an equal chance of being selected – names could be picked out of a hat, or every second person referred could be chosen. Using random methods means that your findings can, to a certain extent, be generalised to all your service-users (the degree to which this is possible will depend on the actual numbers involved).

Purposive sampling

Qualitative data is not intended to be generalisable in the same way, and so the same sampling strictures do not apply. Often 'purposive' sampling is used, whereby individuals with particular characteristics are selected because these characteristics are of specific relevance to the research or evaluation. You may want to ensure, for example, that the particular perspectives of single parents, or fathers, or African parents, or parents with disabilities are included in the evaluation.

In either case the evaluator should ideally be in control of sampling (rather than other gate-keepers such as managers or facilitators, or self-selection by parents). This can best be effected by supplying a list of the whole 'population' from which to select, either randomly or purposively.

5.10 Ethical implications

There are two related issues here, both of which need to be considered before you start to collect data: anonymity and confidentiality. You will need to consider the extent to which either of these can be offered to participants in the evaluation.

Anonymity

This refers to whether individuals or organisations are to be identified at any stage in the research process. Some people will be quite happy to be identifiable, while others may refuse to participate unless they are guaranteed complete anonymity, even for a simple survey. Bear in mind you may not be able to guarantee complete anonymity. For example, some people may be identifiable (even if not named) by the position they hold, or by particular distinctive family circumstances. This can be a problem when reporting qualitative findings. If this is a possibility, you should consult the individuals concerned before circulating your report and if necessary make amendments (by omitting or altering certain details, for example).

Some evaluation methods create problems of their own. For example, if you are using a before-after design, it is vital that the first set of data is correctly matched to the second set, in order to assess change at the individual level. Without some form of identifier, this would not be possible. It is possible to construct systems using serial numbers, but someone, somewhere has to hold the list which matches names to numbers in order for this to work. Ideally this individual should be independent of the evaluation. For simple one-off survey designs, this isn't an issue, and questionnaires can be completely anonymous (unless you want to issue reminders, in which case you need to know who has already responded).

Confidentiality

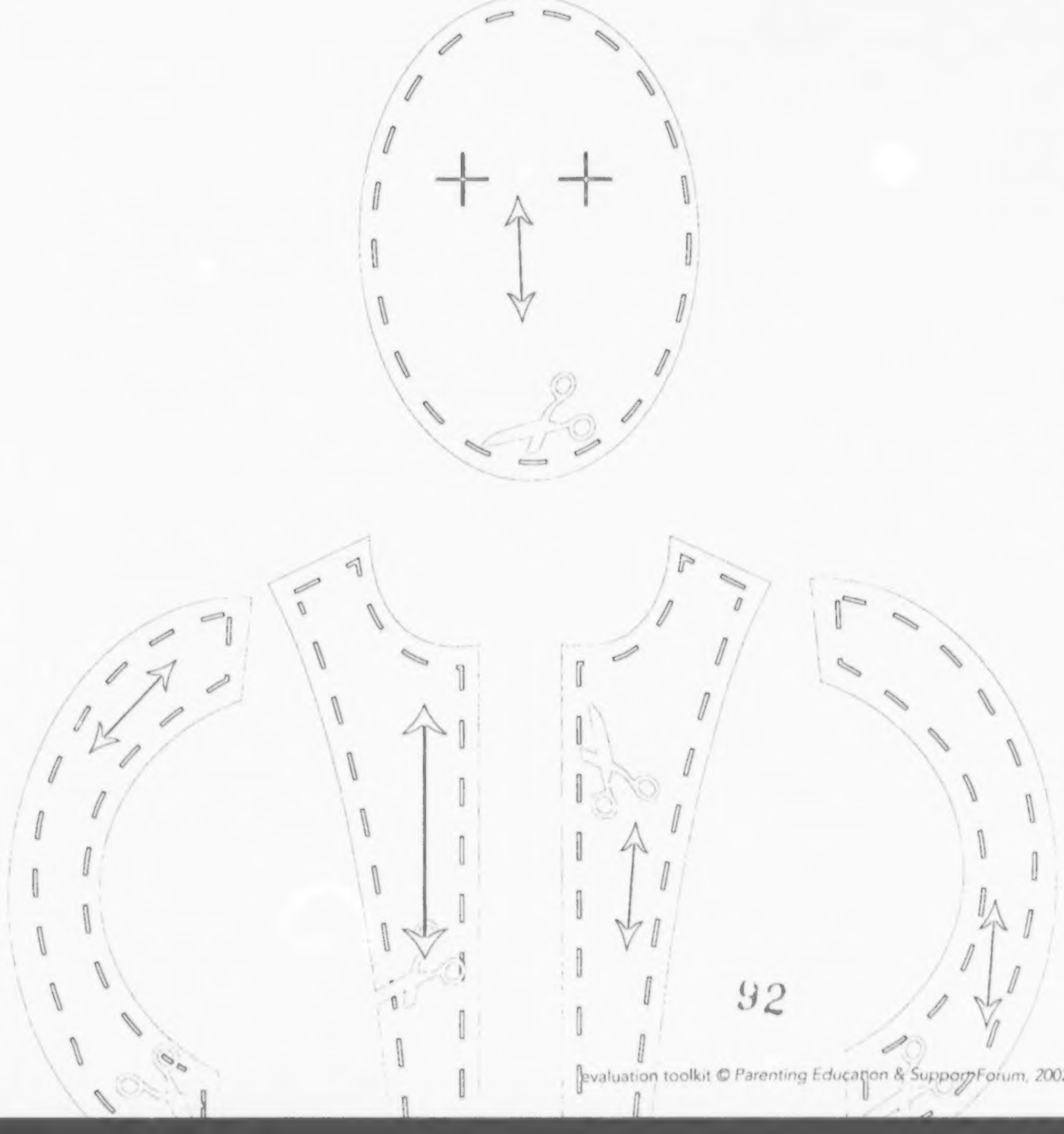
This refers to the status of information given to researchers either in interviews or via questionnaires, whether it can be passed on, and if so, to whom and in what circumstances. The promise of confidentiality is not only an ethical issue, it is a way of maximising response rates, and enhancing the validity of findings; more people are likely to respond, and respond openly and truthfully if they believe their contributions will be treated in confidence.

Confidentiality is probably an easier issue to deal with in independent evaluation situations, as assurances can be given that the data will not be shared outside the research team (but see 'possible exceptions' below). For internal evaluation, the distinction between 'evaluation' and 'practice' is likely to be blurred, and it will be difficult, if not impossible, for the 'everyday' role of the internal evaluator within the project to be completely submerged. Parents may therefore withhold certain information from internal evaluators that they would have been willing to reveal to an independent evaluator.

Confidentiality – exceptions

The limits on confidentiality should be made explicit at the start of the interview or focus group. It might be appropriate to suspend confidentiality, for example in cases where child protection issues were raised during an interview.

For further information about ethical research and evaluation, consult READING, RESOURCES AND CONTACTS for sources.



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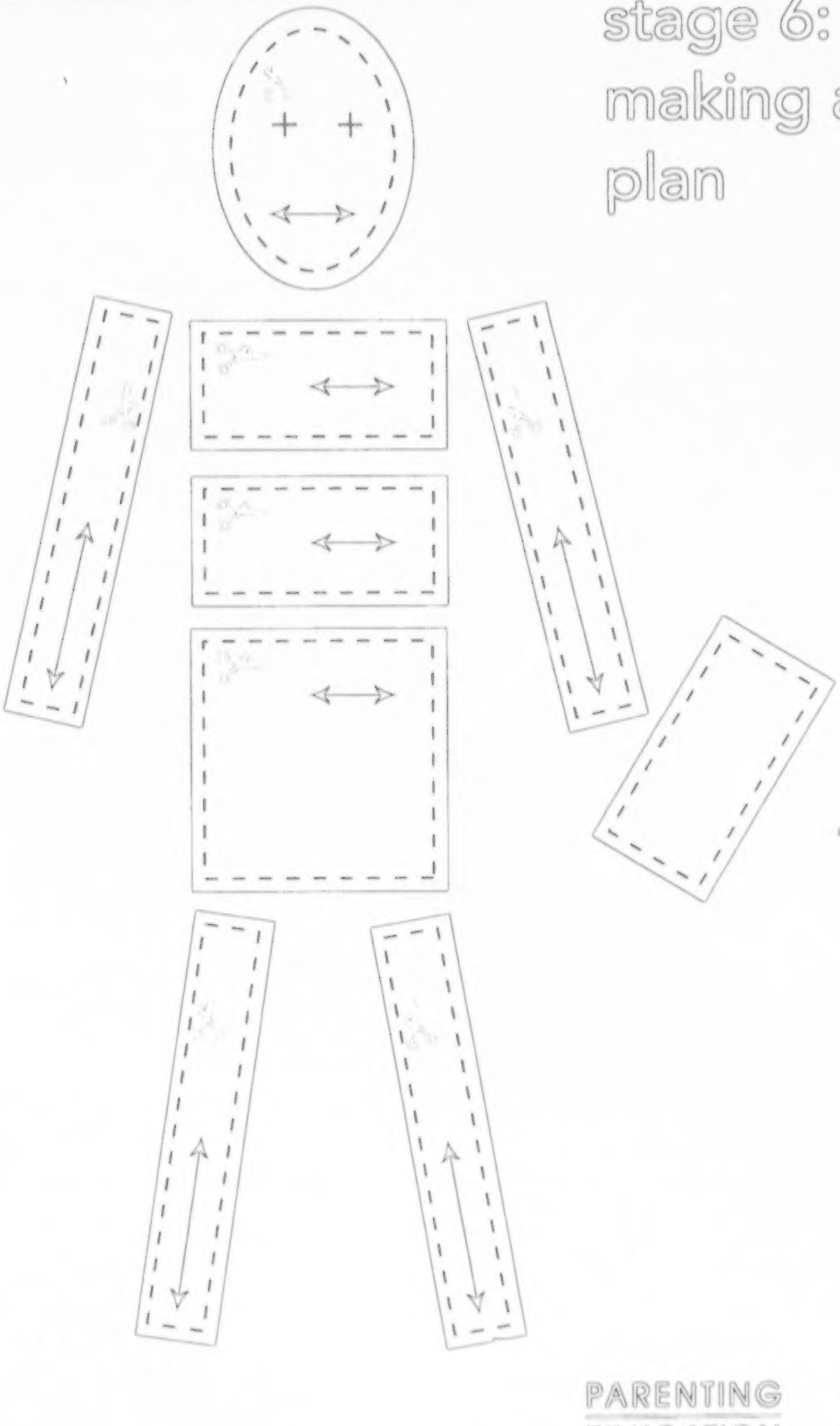
stage 6: making a plan



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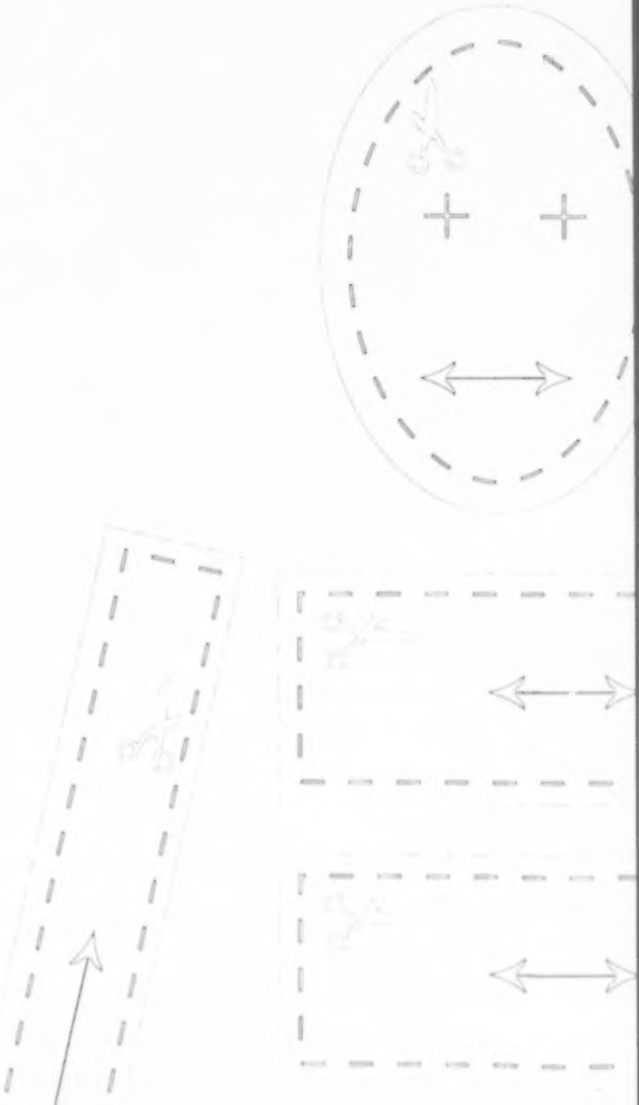
Starting point:

It is assumed that you now have a pretty clear idea of your evaluation design and the data collection requirements of your project. This stage is about ensuring it all happens – the detailed planning, management and timetabling of the evaluation. The text takes you through the planning process step by step.

Questions to be considered:
- What will be happening and when?
- Who will be doing what?

You may also want to look at:
- GOLDEN RULES

By the end of this stage you should have:
- A detailed written plan and timetable
- Ensured the plan has been agreed by all relevant parties



6.1 Preliminaries

Planning an evaluation is no different to planning any other kind of project. However if you have never undertaken an evaluation before, there are stages and details that it could be easy to overlook. This section is here to ensure that nothing is missed from your plan.
Gather together the people and things you need to help you with your plan.

Who should you involve?
Consider setting up a small steering group – formal or informal. By sharing the responsibility in this way and involving more stakeholders, ownership of the evaluation will be enhanced. In any case several heads are better than one. Get them involved in drawing up the plan.

Even if you are commissioning an external evaluation, a plan is still important. Not only will you want to check that your evaluators are keeping to the schedule, you will need to know when the fieldwork will be taking place, and when draft reports will be circulated etc. All parties need to agree the plan and be clear about roles and responsibilities

What will you need?
You will need:
- Your design summary sheet (stage 4)
- A note of dates and deadlines related to the parenting project
- Some means of drafting and mapping out your plan. This could be on a computer spreadsheet or table, or on a large sheet of paper.

See EXAMPLE PLANS (overleaf) for layout ideas.

6.2 Getting the timing right

There is no 'right length' for an evaluation process. Some will be completed in a matter of weeks, others will last for months or years. The main thing is that everything gets done that needs to be done within the time available, and that all important deadlines are met.

Be aware of how much time you have. You may need to work to externally imposed deadlines and milestones. Someone may be demanding results at a particular time, or the money set aside for evaluation may need to be spent within the financial year. It is also important that the timing of the evaluation dovetails with the natural life-span and cycles of the project itself. For example, if the project runs termly parenting programmes, data collection will need to be timed accordingly.

Sometimes when planning it will be possible to know actual dates of events (such as the start of a parenting course) in advance. On other occasions the plan will have to have an element of flexibility. For example, if a new service is about to start up, there may be uncertainty about exactly what will be happening and when. In such circumstances, it may only be possible to sketch out the likely sequence of events.

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Example plan 1 – a timeline
Planning and timetabling (in progress) for basic evaluation

Date	Project and other milestones and deadlines	Evaluation activity / item	Who involved
3rd Jan	Staff meeting	Inform staff about evaluation	Me, staff
9th Jan	Management committee meet	Presentation about evaluation	Me
		Devise (and print and photocopy) questionnaires, inform parents about evaluation, set up monitoring system (speak to Anita about this!)	Me, Anita, Kalsoom
13th Feb	Toddlers parenting group starts	Give out 'baseline' questionnaires	Kalsoom
		Make sure monitoring continues	Me, Anita
4th April	Last session of toddlers group	Give out second questionnaire	Kalsoom
		Facilitator fill course review sheet	Kalsoom
2nd May	Toddlers group reunion coffee morning	Follow-up questionnaire	Kalsoom
		Data analysis (monitoring, findings) If possible, start writing report …	Me Me
May 22 – 29	I'm on HOLIDAY		
		Finish writing report Discuss draft with staff	Me
June 9th		Have final version ready for copying and posting	Me, Anita
June 16th	Management committee	Present final report (NB need to send out in advance)	
Late June?		Feedback to staff (staff meeting?) – don't forget to thank them for their work. Celebration??	
??		Other dissemination – think about strategy	
After the summer holidays		Make changes to programme as required, plan next evaluation (if enough energy)	

Example plan 2 – the grid approach

	March	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Community centre parenting groups – dates			1 Starts May 9th	Finish June 23rd		*MOST STAFF ON HOLS*	2 Starts Sep 11th	Finish Oct 24th	3 Starts Nov 2nd	Finish Dec 17th			Report due by end of month
Monitoring (all referrals from April)											Carry on monitoring (but don't include in evaluation)		
Questionnaires (start, finish)			S	F	Group1 interviews		S	F	S	F			
Individual interviews with parents				Interview schedules					Group 2 interviews		Group 3 interviews		
Devising questionnaires, data processing, analysis and reporting	Set up monitoring	Devise questionnaires			[Check monitoring]		Have a look at data from group 1				Start sorting out all data this month	Start writing report	Circulate draft (early March)
Communications	Staff meeting	Letter to parents (group 1)			Letter to parents (group 2)		Feedback findings so far to staff (staff meeting)	Letter to parents (group 3)					

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Some hints on timing and pacing

- Make sure your start date is far enough ahead to get people on board, everything sorted and ready to go.
- Build in time for contingency and slippage. Things may take longer than you'd expect (even seasoned researchers rarely allow enough time for questionnaire design, for example).
- Try to ensure that the more labour-intensive aspects of the evaluation do not coincide with the most stressful or busy times of year for the project.
- Avoid trying to collect data during holiday periods

6.3 The planning sequence

1. Fill in all unmoveable dates

- If you have a reporting deadline, work backwards from there when planning data collection and analysis.
- Even if you don't have an externally imposed deadline, there may be some event at which you want to present or publish findings (training seminar, annual report)
- Mark in project milestones, such as start and finish dates for parenting groups

2. Mark data collection periods

- Most of this will need to fit around project milestones (start of monitoring, questionnaires to parents, follow-up focus groups etc).
- If you need a minimum number of cases[1] for a quantitative study, how long will it take to achieve this sample size?
- For postal surveys you will need to allow time for questionnaires to be returned (and possibly also to send out round of reminders for those who don't respond first time).
- If you are planning to do a follow-up study, how long after the end of the intervention would be appropriate? Make sure you have time.

3. Essential preparation for data collection

- You will need to devise monitoring systems and procedures well in advance of starting to collect the data.
- Allow time for design and production of questionnaires. Be warned, this may take longer than you expect.

4. Ethical issues

- Consider the information parents (and others?) will need in order to make an informed decision about whether they participate in the evaluation [see box on p7 opposite]. How and when will they receive this information? Obtaining informed consent takes time; people may want to think things over, or ask further questions. Build this into your plan

---

[1] Only applicable to intermediate or advanced evaluation designs, for which statistical significance is an issue.

- If your evaluation needs approval from an ethics committee, allow time for this. Find out relevant dates and deadlines; be aware that some committees only meet every few months. You will probably be expected to submit questionnaires and so on, so these will need to be prepared in advance.

Obtaining information consent – some considerations

Participants will need to know

- What the purpose of the evaluation is and who it is for
- How and why they were selected, if part of a sample
- What taking part will involve, and when
- What will happen to the data and who will see it

Ways of imparting the information

- By the evaluator directly, or staff from the project
- Verbal or written? Or both? It is good practice to provide written information, although people also need the opportunity to discuss or ask questions

Giving consent

- Do you want people to positively opt-in, or will it be acceptable to assume they consent if they do not actively opt-out?
- Do you require written consent?

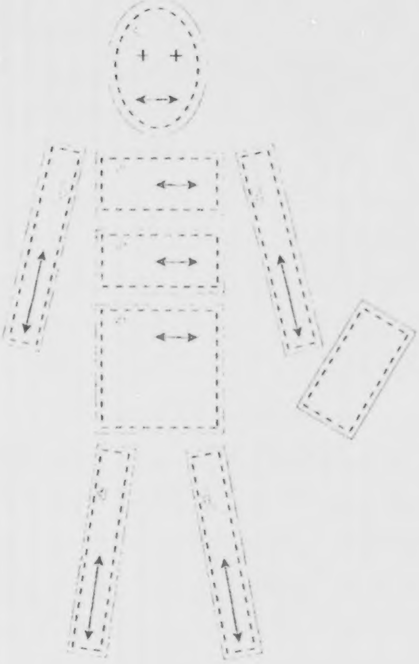
Remember that consent to participate in principle does not commit a person to answering every (or indeed any) question. This should be stressed. Consent can be withdrawn at any point.

5. Data processing and analysis

- Some data will need to be processed before it can be analysed. Taped interviews will need to be transcribed (or notes written up). Information from questionnaires may need to be entered into a computer programme.
- If such processing tasks are likely to involve administrative staff or outside agencies, make sure they are given advance notice.
- Will all the data arrive at once and need processing and analysing rapidly? Or could it be fed through in stages, and dealt with while the evaluation is in progress?

6. Reporting and dissemination

- Ideally, evaluation findings should be used to inform decision-making about a project's future. Wherever possible this should be facilitated, by ensuring reports are produced and disseminated at an appropriate point in the planning cycle.
- Allow time for drafting and redrafting your report. You may want to get the views of others on a first draft.
- Also build in time for copying and distribution (if appropriate).
- You may also want to start thinking at this stage how and when evaluation findings will be fed back to other stakeholders (parents, staff etc).



7. Who will be doing what

- If you are engaged in self-evaluation start to think through exactly who will be doing what. Mark it on your plan and get agreement.
- Don't forget to consider the impact on support or administrative staff (who may well have to implement new monitoring systems or collate existing data).
- Even if you are commissioning an independent external evaluation, it is well worth discussing in some detail the practicalities; you may find that project staff will need to be involved in, for example, making initial contacts with parents, or handing out and collecting questionnaires, or photocopying records. This may or may not be a problem, but it certainly needs to be discussed and agreed at the outset.

8. Communications

- For your evaluation to get off to a good start, it is important to build a solid foundation of goodwill and co-operation. Doing this early on will prevent all manner of problems and difficulties further down the line. This does not require techniques or skills specific to evaluation, it simply involves being sensitive, transparent and inclusive. Ideally an open and trusting relationship should be established between the evaluator and other stakeholders.
- At each stage, check that you are building in communications to your plan – letting people know what is happening, how they will be involved, and giving them opportunities to feed back or debrief.

Planning in progress – not all plain sailing

You may find that it just isn't working. Your ideal design and the real-world timescales just don't seem to fit.
If this appears to be the case, don't try and force the issue by squeezing extra time out of your 'contingency' before you've even started, this will only put you under unnecessary pressure. Accept that some things just can't be done. And be relieved that you have discovered this now, rather than once the evaluation was under way. Revisit your design, or even your evaluation questions.

Now you've finished …

- Make a final version – on a wallplanner, in a diary, or on a large sheet of paper.
- Keep the plan in view, or close to hand.
- Don't file it away, as you will almost certainly want to refer to it frequently, and may need to make revisions as the evaluation progresses.

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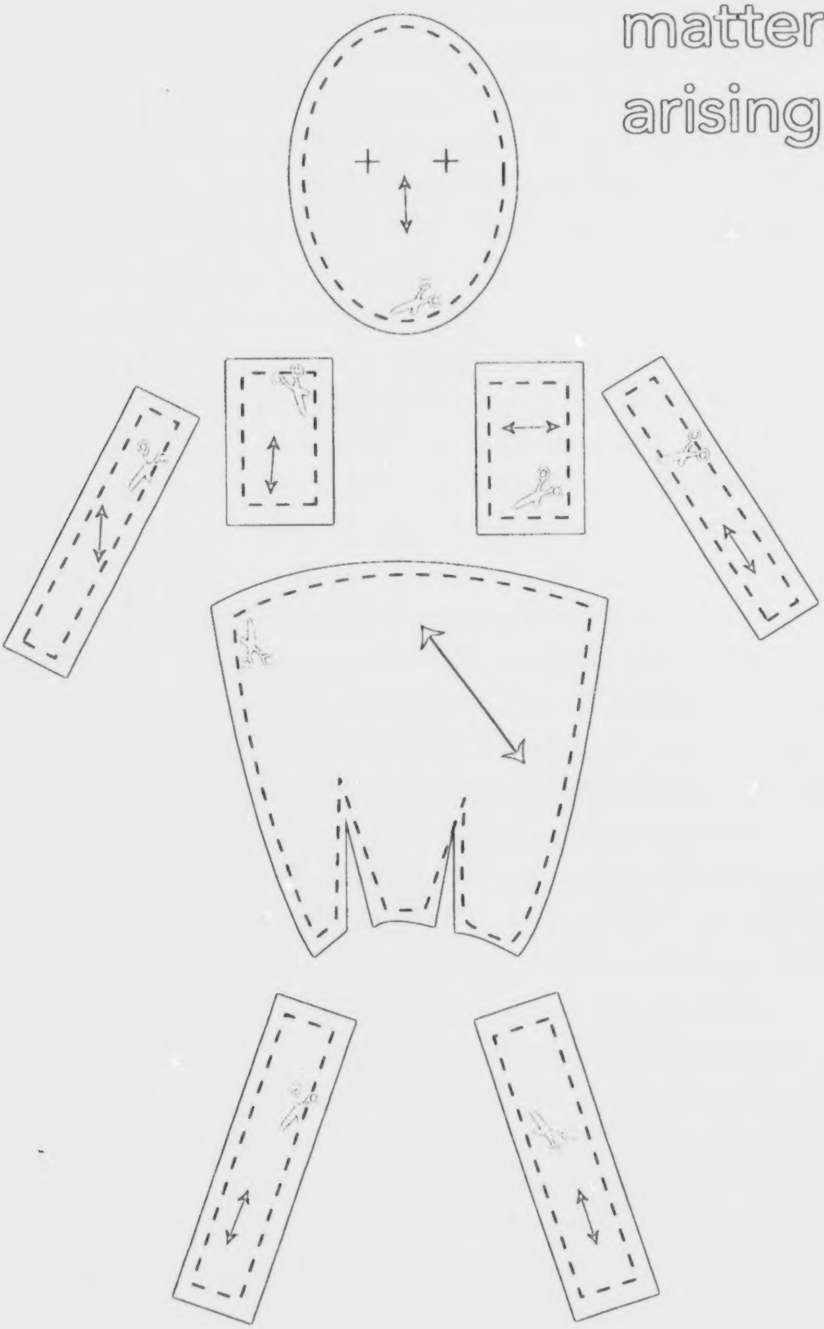
stage 7: matters arising



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Starting point:

Your evaluation plan has been agreed and data collection is probably underway, or about to start. This stage has been included to alert you to some practical difficulties or pitfalls you may encounter, and some ways in which bias may creep into your data. Suggestions for alleviating or minimising the effects are included where possible.

Questions to be considered:

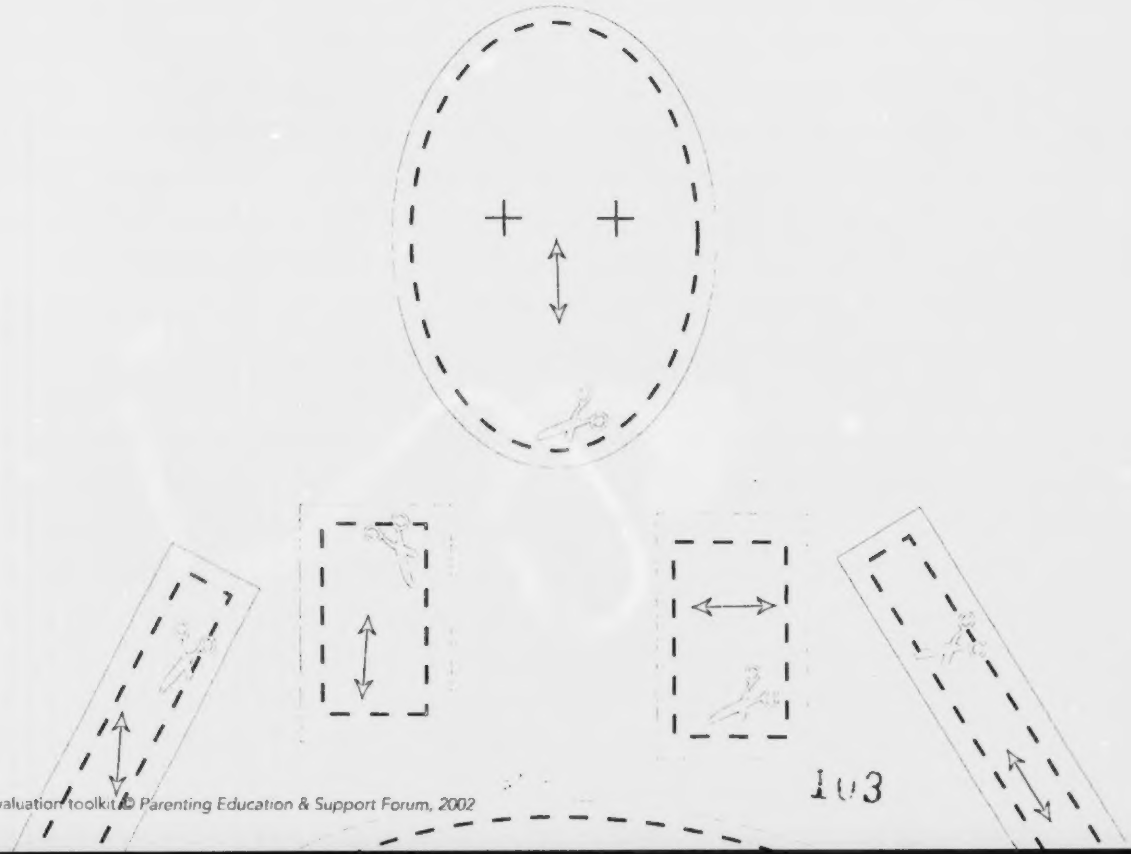
- What practical difficulties may lie ahead?
- How can we minimise bias in our data?
- Are we adhering to ethical practices?

You may also want to look at:

- GOLDEN RULES

By the end of this stage you should have:

- Taken practical steps to minimise bias where possible
- Collected some or all of your data



7.1 Practicalities

Gate-keepers

Be warned that you may encounter individuals who come between you and the data you need to collect. This is often simply a matter of well-meaning protectiveness or natural wariness about the conduct and purpose of the evaluation.

Data protection and confidentiality

For more advanced designs, involving data collection across agencies, you could encounter data protection issues and the confidentiality policies of other organisations.

Other priorities

Evaluation is likely to be one of the first things to suffer when the pressure is on in a project, for example because of staff shortages or other crises. When people are over-stretched and 'fire-fighting', evaluation is not usually a high priority.

In all cases, be prepared to reassure, negotiate and compromise if necessary, but bear in mind, this may have implications for the timing or design of your evaluation.

7.2 Dealing with feelings about evaluation

Paying attention to effective communications, informed consent and stakeholder involvement may have alleviated some fears and anxieties at the start of the process, but once data collection becomes a reality such worries are likely to resurface. It is important to recognise and acknowledge these very natural responses (as well as doing everything possible to prevent or alleviate them). Aside from effects on trust and morale within the project, a lack of co-operation with the evaluation will have implications for the quality of the data collected.

Staff and management may

- feel that their practice is 'under scrutiny'
- worry that failings and short-comings will be uncovered and publicised
- be concerned about how findings may be used (are their jobs on the line?)

Parents may

- feel pressured to take part
- resent intrusive questions from outsiders, or 'going over old ground' with project staff
- become upset if painful emotions are stirred up
- feel protective of their children, if children are to be involved in the evaluation
- have concerns about confidentiality (is it safe to tell the truth eg about incidents at home, domestic violence, smacking their children, substance abuse etc)

External evaluators may

- feel isolated and uncomfortable in a suspicious or resentful environment
- struggle to maintain objectivity in an over-friendly and inclusive environment
- be subjected to pressure (for example, to break confidentiality or suppress findings)

Suggestions for addressing these issues

Staff and management:

Ensure that advance information allays such fears and addresses specific concerns. It may be appropriate to ensure that discussion of the evaluation is built into staff supervision.

Parents:

Ensure that advance information allays such fears and addresses specific concerns. Discuss confidentiality (and its limits). Make time to debrief and reassure parents and children after they have been involved in evaluation activities

External evaluators:

Establish and maintain a welcoming but professional relationship with external evaluators or consultants.

7.3 Keeping an eye on ethics

If the evaluation is likely to probe into difficult or sensitive areas, some parents may become angry or upset, regardless of the skills and sensitivity of the evaluator. This is particularly relevant to interview situations, although questionnaire content or wording can also evoke strong reactions.

You need to consider how you – or an external evaluator – should respond in such circumstances. It may be sufficient to suspend an interview briefly, or remind the interviewee that they can withdraw at any time. Whilst remaining sympathetic, an external evaluator should avoid taking on the role of counsellor or advice worker: distressed parents could be referred back to the project, or to another appropriate organisation.

7.4 Avoiding bias

All evaluations should be striving for truth while at the same time recognising that there may be more than one version of 'the truth' out there. You need to gather the most complete and accurate information possible from all sources consulted: the truth, the whole truth (no missing data) and nothing but the truth (no extraneous matter, irrelevant information, lies or whitewash). However, there will inevitably be pitfalls along the route. You are unlikely to be able to avoid them all, but it makes sense to try. And where there is nothing to be done, it is important to be aware of – and acknowledge – any bias (systematic distortion) that may exist in your findings.

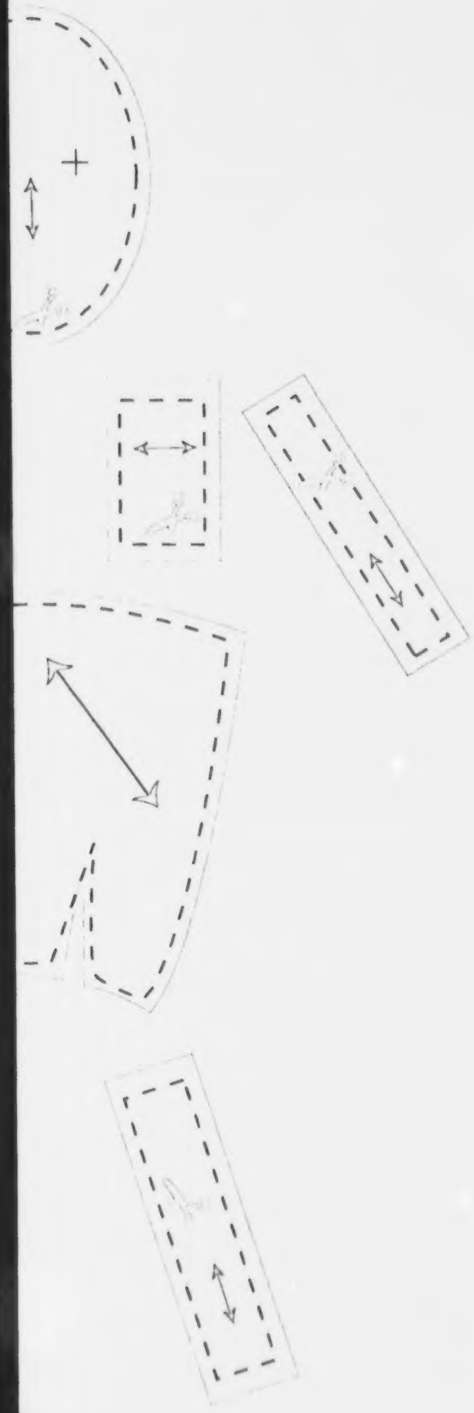
Response bias

Once your sample has been selected, it is important that all these people are enabled and encouraged to take part. You need to persuade rather than pressurise, be inclusive rather than intimidating. Think about practical measures that can be taken to maximise response and minimise bias:

- What kind of information have parents been given about the evaluation – is it sufficient, is it persuasive, is the language appropriate?
- Do you need to provide 'thank you' payments or gifts in order to maximise co-operation?
- Do questionnaires have to be completed in parents' own time, or can this be built into the programme?
- If parents have to attend the project for interviews or focus groups, is childcare provided?
- Are travel expenses paid?
- Are interpreters or translation facilities available?
- Are SAEs provided with postal questionnaires?
- Can interviews or focus groups take place at evenings or weekends for respondents who work during the day?

Try and make sure you are not (unwittingly) doing anything that actually hinders participation, and in particular which might affect some groups more than others. This might involve insensitivity to cultural or religious issues, for example sending a male interviewer to interview Muslim mothers, or planning a focus group for young Dads on the day of the cup final. You might have to make additional efforts or offer incentives to dissatisfied parents, or those who dropped out of the parenting programme, in order to get them to co-operate with the evaluation.

Do what you can, but recognise that it is virtually impossible to eliminate response bias altogether. Given this fact, it is important to reflect on what systematic differences there may be between people who did and didn't participate in the evaluation (even though selected to do so). Are non-respondents different in any significant way from those who did take part? What might their reasons be for not wishing to take part?



Other sources of bias

Before collecting any data directly from people, consider what factors may lead to distortion, inaccuracy or being 'economical with the truth', either consciously or unconsciously. Again, you are unlikely to be able to eliminate such behaviour entirely, but it is certainly worth trying to create a climate in which it is minimised. Many of the factors discussed in relation to feelings about evaluation (section 7.2 above) may have an impact on the quality and quantity of data provided.

- Staff may feel their performance is under scrutiny, or their jobs are on the line.
- Management may not want their failings exposed, or may have political agendas.
- Parents may have concerns about confidentiality, feel conflicts of loyalty (not wishing to be critical of 'helpful' staff), or be convinced that the evaluation is just another way to identify the 'bad parents' in the group.
- Children may not wish to or feel able to criticise their parents or service staff.

Good advance information about the evaluation in general (its purpose, and the use to which findings will be put) and confidentiality in particular is essential. This should be revisited before distributing questionnaires and at the start of any interview.

It is also important to ensure that evaluation participants are made to feel relaxed and comfortable in an interview situation. It is the responsibility of the interviewer to ensure this, by making sure the environment is appropriate and that the interviewee has been put at ease. Consider the following:

- Where the interview takes place. Whose space is it? Is it 'official' or intimidating in any way, perhaps a reminder of school or an immigration interview?
- Are other people within hearing distance?
- Sometimes people feel more comfortable in their own home, but this should not be assumed. Interviewees should be offered a choice of venue if at all possible.

Before moving on, note down your thoughts about potential bias in your data. There may be nothing more that you can do to avoid it, but you can at least be aware of it, and ensure that you take it into account when interpreting and reporting your findings.

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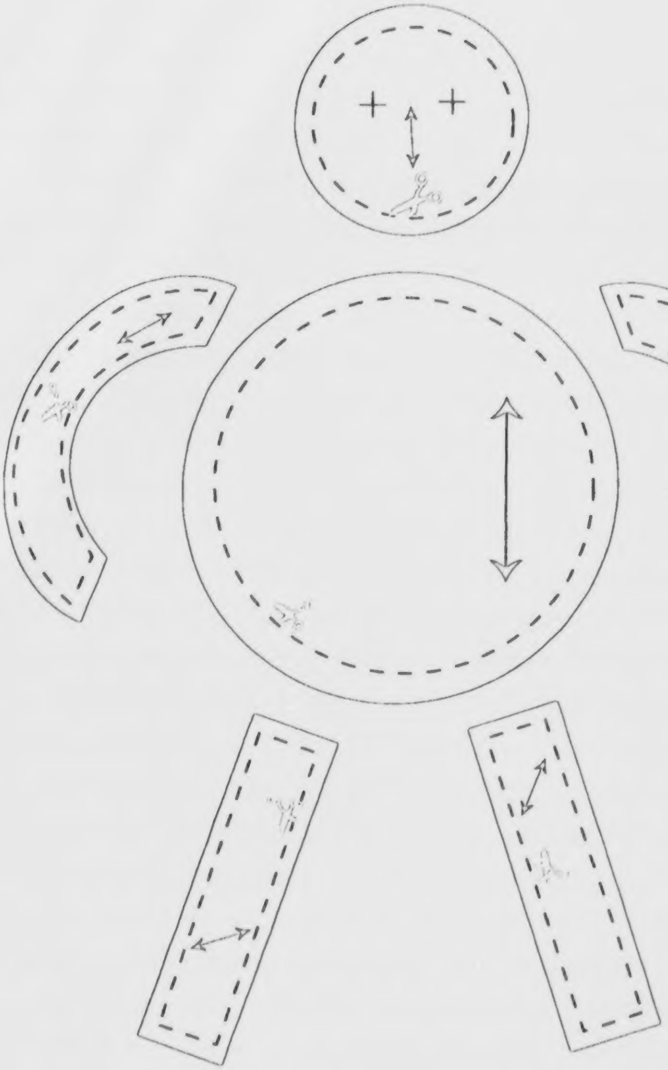
stage 8: data analysis



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Starting point:

You have now collected some or all of your evidence – it's time to start making sense of it. This stage is where you will start to unearth the answers to your evaluation questions. The text gives tips and hints to those at a basic or intermediate level, and also provides some insight into what independent evaluators or consultants might be up to.

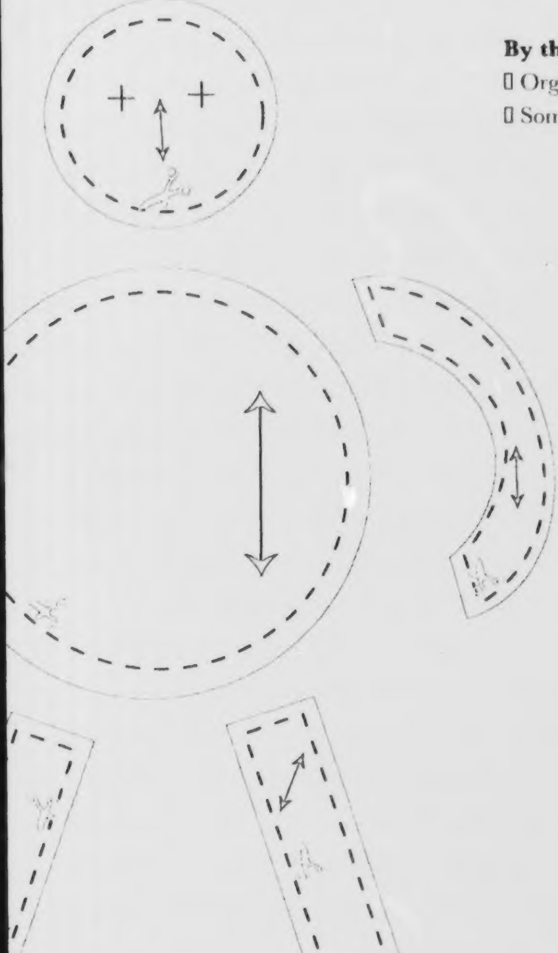
Questions to be considered:

- How can our data be organised and simplified?
- What have we discovered?
- How can we interpret the results?
- What conclusions can be drawn?

- READING, RESOURCES AND CONTACTS
- GOLDEN RULES

By the end of this stage you should have:

- Organised, summarised and collated your data
- Some answers to your evaluation questions



This section is designed to give some tips and hints to self-evaluators with little or no previous experience of research or evaluation – very basic stuff. A brief overview of what the professionals might be up to (if you are working with external evaluators) is also included. However, we are not attempting to give a crash course in either statistics or qualitative analysis. For those who want to delve a little deeper, consult READING, RESOURCES AND CONTACTS.

8.1 Getting organised

Even the most basic of evaluations can generate a surprising amount of data – you need to make sure it is organised and under control from the start.

Keep an eye on your data as it is collected and ensure that it is filed away safely until you need it. Simple procedures such as keeping 'batches' of questionnaires relating to particular groups together, with identifying labels and dates will save time and confusion later on.

Organisational tip No.1

Give all questionnaires a simple, unique reference number, and keep completed ones filed in numerical order. The number needn't 'mean' anything, it is just a way of identifying a particular questionnaire (you may need to return to them at various points in the analysis).

You should also be 'monitoring' your monitoring system regularly. Are procedures being followed? Is everything up to date? Are there any gaps in the data, and what can be done about this?

Before moving on to the data itself, remind yourself of your evaluation questions. It is easy to get distracted.

8.2 Quantitative data

This is data involving numbers, or things that can be counted. People often assume that they couldn't possibly do quantitative analysis and, of course, many quantitative techniques are highly specialised and require expert assistance. But if you can count, or calculate an average or a percentage, you are more than capable of undertaking some basic analysis of quantitative data.

Dealing with monitoring data

The purpose of monitoring is to provide a description of service, as it goes along. You may well be looking at your monitoring data quite often, in order to see how the service is progressing, or you may need to pull out figures for management (perhaps on a quarterly basis).

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For the purpose of the evaluation, you may want to consider monitoring data over the whole of the evaluation period, and use it as a summary description of the service during this time. On the other hand, it may be more appropriate to break it down (for instance group by group, or month by month) and look for trends or patterns. It very much depends on the scale and length of the evaluation, and the questions you are trying to address.

Dealing with questionnaires (structured)

This section gives advice on how to deal with structured information from questionnaires. For dealing with unstructured questionnaires, or individual open-ended questions, see the section on qualitative data (8.3) below.

Basic and intermediate level evaluations are unlikely to be dealing with particularly complex questionnaires, nor with vast numbers of responses. In such circumstances you have a choice – you can either use manual methods or computer packages to help you organise your data.

Manual methods

You may feel most comfortable with 'pen and paper' methods, and if your numbers are small (say, under 20), your questionnaires are short (1 or 2 sides), this may well be the most efficient way of dealing with your data. Before you start transferring information from the questionnaires, think about whether there is any simple sorting exercise that will save you time later on. For example you may want to look at each parenting group separately, and then compare or combine findings. Alternatively there may be a clear issue relating to your evaluation questions which suggests that the data should be dealt with in a certain way (for example comparing parents on Parenting Orders to voluntary referrals). If there is a simple way of sorting the questionnaires into meaningful batches – then do so now. If not, just deal with them numerically. If you have not yet numbered your questionnaires, do so immediately (see 'organisational tip' No.1).

The best way of proceeding is to create a blank grid (this may go over more than one page), and transfer all your data from the questionnaires onto this. An example of how this can be done is set out on p5, using an extract from a sample questionnaire.

Sample evaluation questionnaire (extract)

Q1 Gender: Male ☐
Female ☐

Q2 What is your age? ....

Q3 Overall, how enjoyable did you find the parenting course?

Very enjoyable ☐
Quite enjoyable ☐
Not very enjoyable ☐
Not at all enjoyable ☐

Q4 What did you find most enjoyable about the course?

....

Q5 How do you usually travel to the centre?
Car ☐
Bus ☐
Walk ☐
Other ☐

Q6 Have you any other comments about the parenting course?

....

Transferring data from questionnaires onto a grid (manual version)

Questionnaire numbers:	1	2	3	4	5
Q1 (Gender)	M	F	F	F	
Q2 (Age)	42	28	33	'Over 21'	
Q3 (Enjoy)	Quite	Very	Quite	Quite	
Q5 (Travel)	Bus	Other (taxi)	Walk	Walk	

Notes: You will have to make a judgement about how to deal with the information in the shaded squares. For example, you may well decide to omit 'over 21' and count it as missing data. If it turns out that several respondents come to the centre by taxi, you may want to make this into a category in its own right.

Questions 4 and 6 have been omitted from the grid, as they are open-ended questions and will therefore provide qualitative data (see section 8.3 below for dealing with these and similar questions).

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Using Information Technology

If you are a confident user of spreadsheets or databases, you may want to use such packages to help analyse your data, but don't forget to factor in the time required to set up the template and actually enter the data. This will almost certainly be a worthwhile exercise if you want to be able to explore differences between sub-groups, for example (eg fathers and mothers, white and minority ethnic groups, referred cases and self-referrals, summer group and autumn group), or if you have a larger number of questionnaires, or if the questionnaires are longer than a couple of sides.

The assumption is that you – or colleagues – have the necessary skills and understanding to both set up a suitable template and extract information from the file created without further assistance from the Toolkit. If not, you will need to use manual methods.

Advice:

There are however a couple of important pieces of advice that we can provide:

1. Be sure to enter the unique number of each questionnaire as well as the actual data from that questionnaire. If you have not yet numbered your questionnaires, do so immediately (see 'organisational tip' above).

2. If you are using a spreadsheet, you may need to convert some of the data into a numerical form in order to get the most out of analysis options.
See below for an example.

Transferring data from questionnaires onto a grid (IT version)

Questionnaire numbers:	1	2	3	4	5
Q1 (Gender)	1	2	2	2	
Q2 (Age)	42	28	33	'Over 21'	
Q3 (Enjoy)	2	1	2	2	
Q5 (Travel)	2	4	3	3	

Notes: *'Code' numbers have been assigned to responses (Male=1, Female=2 etc). You will have to make a judgement about how to deal with the information in the shaded spaces. You may well decide to omit 'over 21' and count it as missing data (you could leave the space blank, or assign a different type of code). If it turns out that several respondents come to the centre by taxi, you may want to make this into a category in its own right, assigning code 5, for example. Questions 4 and 6 have been omitted from the grid, as they are open-ended questions and will therefore provide qualitative data (see section 8.3 below for dealing with these and similar questions).*

Organisation and analysis

Good analysis always starts from a frequency count of every question. This will give you a quick 'feel' for findings, and may suggest further questions to ask of your data. If you are using manual methods, this will involve counting up each type of response across the grid.

Organisational tip No.2

- Take a blank copy of the questionnaire and enter the totals for each response (noting where blanks occur or data is missing). This gives you a convenient summary document.

For numerical data (for example, age in our example) there are a number of options, depending on your interests:

- Collect the data into set categories (eg 16-25, 26-35 and so on)
- Just record the range (highest and lowest)
- Calculate the average

You may find it helpful to convert your raw numbers into percentages. This is particularly useful if you want to compare groups of different sizes.

What external evaluators or consultants may be doing

- Using data analysis packages such as SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences)
- If comparisons are made between groups, or over time, calculations of statistical significance may be appropriate

8.3 Qualitative data

Qualitative data can come from a number of sources – open-ended questions in questionnaires, interviews or focus groups, or notes made by facilitators. It can also come in a number of forms, including drawings, photographs, videos as well as the written or spoken word.

Although very different from quantitative data, qualitative data nevertheless still needs to be sorted and coded in order for sense to be made of it. Whatever form or forms your qualitative data comes in, the first step is to familiarise yourself with it. Before doing anything else, review it all quickly to get a general feel for the kinds of issues covered.

Dealing with questionnaires (open-ended questions)

Consider one question at a time and start reading through the responses. After a while you will start to spot some common themes (even if not expressed in exactly the same words). Note these down as they occur – this is the beginning of a simple 'coding' system for organising the data. Don't worry if some responses don't seem to fit easily (this is inevitable). You may find you need to change your themes or categories slightly as you go along in order that they fit the data better. You probably won't need to go through all the questionnaires in order to come up with a reasonable coding system that covers most responses (there will always be a few that need to be dealt with under a miscellaneous heading).

Then return to your questionnaires, and go through them all allocating codes (some responses may cover more than one theme – that's OK). Transfer the information onto a single sheet of paper. Make a note of any questionnaires with interesting quotes you may want to use later in your report. Don't forget to record 'blank' responses too.

Take question 4 from our sample questionnaire (p5).

Q4 What did you find most enjoyable about the course?

....

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Following the procedure described above, you may come up with something like this for a group of 12 parents:

Q4 Most enjoyable?	Questionnaires	Notes
The themes you have identified are listed below		
Friends, social	1, 5, 6, 12	6 – quote about meeting up with other mothers for coffee
Listened to	2, 9, 10	
Common problems	2, 4, 6	2 – good quote
Getting out	1, 6	
Learning new things	4,10, 11	10 – quote about boundaries
Miscellaneous/other	2, 12	2 – "Refreshments" 12 – "Watching videos"
No response	3, 7, 8	

In some situations you may want to 'convert' this qualitative data into a quantitative form. This can easily be done by counting the number of questionnaires listed against each response category (see above).

For completely open questions like Q6 in our sample questionnaire ("Have you any other comments about the parenting course?") you may want to divide comments into 'positive' and 'negative' remarks, with further sub-categories as appropriate.

Dealing with interviews and focus groups

What form is your data in? If you have audio-tapes of interviews or focus groups, these will need to be transcribed – either in full (very time consuming), or in note form (you may later want to transcribe verbatim particular sections or quotations, so keep a record of where on the tape such 'interesting' bits occur). Deal with the information question by question or issue by issue as in the examples given above for open-ended questionnaire data.

What external evaluators or consultants may be doing

External evaluators will be involved in exactly the same kinds of process as those described above. However, full-blown qualitative analysis is a painstaking and exhaustive process if done properly – it will involve returning to the data many times, revising categories and developing sub-themes. There are a number of data analysis packages to assist with the analysis of qualitative data, some of the better-known ones being NU*DIST and NVivo. Some qualitative researchers favour manual methods – this typically involves summarising and recording data onto large grids

8.4 Interpretation

By now you will probably have gathered and organised enough evidence to answer your evaluation questions. However, it may still be in discrete 'clumps' – parents' questionnaires, feedback from facilitators, monitoring data etc. Now is the time to bring it together in a more meaningful way, and to try and understand what it tells you.

This is where the key principles of monitoring, triangulation and multiple perspectives reap their rewards. Monitoring data can be used to explain some of your other findings, as well as providing a basic descriptive backdrop.

For example, analysis of parents' feedback questionnaires may indicate that a particular parenting group was less popular than others. You may well be wondering why this was. Look to other sources of data:

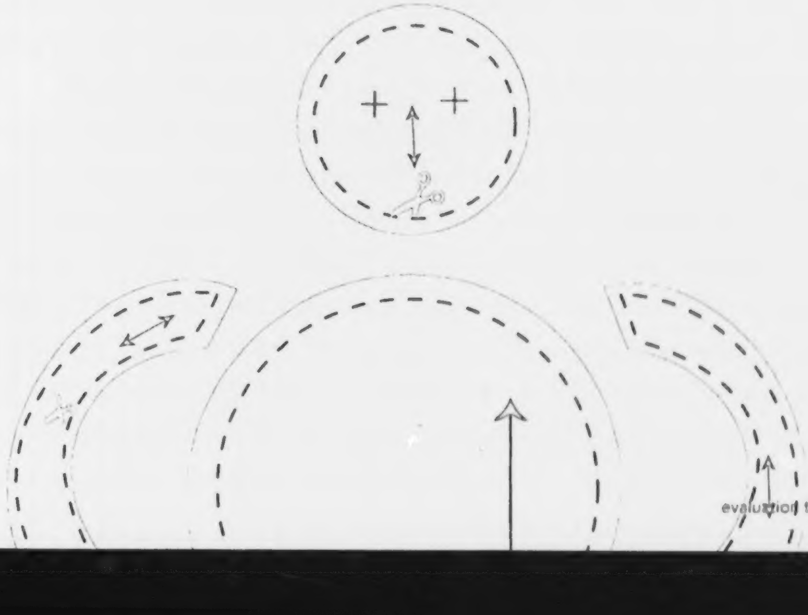
- Monitoring data may support this finding, by showing for instance a sporadic pattern of attendance
- Comments recorded at the time by the group facilitator might throw up additional information, for example referring to problems with group dynamics, or practical difficulties relating to the venue.

Thinking about missing data and bias

Sometimes multiple perspectives will all 'point in the same direction' (as in the example above, where all evidence sources suggest problems with this particular group). On other occasions, differing viewpoints will be encountered. The benefits of a particular parenting course may be perceived quite differently by facilitators ("enhanced understanding of family relationships" for example), by parents ("a break from staring at four walls") and by their children ("Mum's a lot calmer at home these days").

Finally, return to your evaluation questions. Summarise your answers briefly below (referring to supporting evidence).

Question	*Answer*



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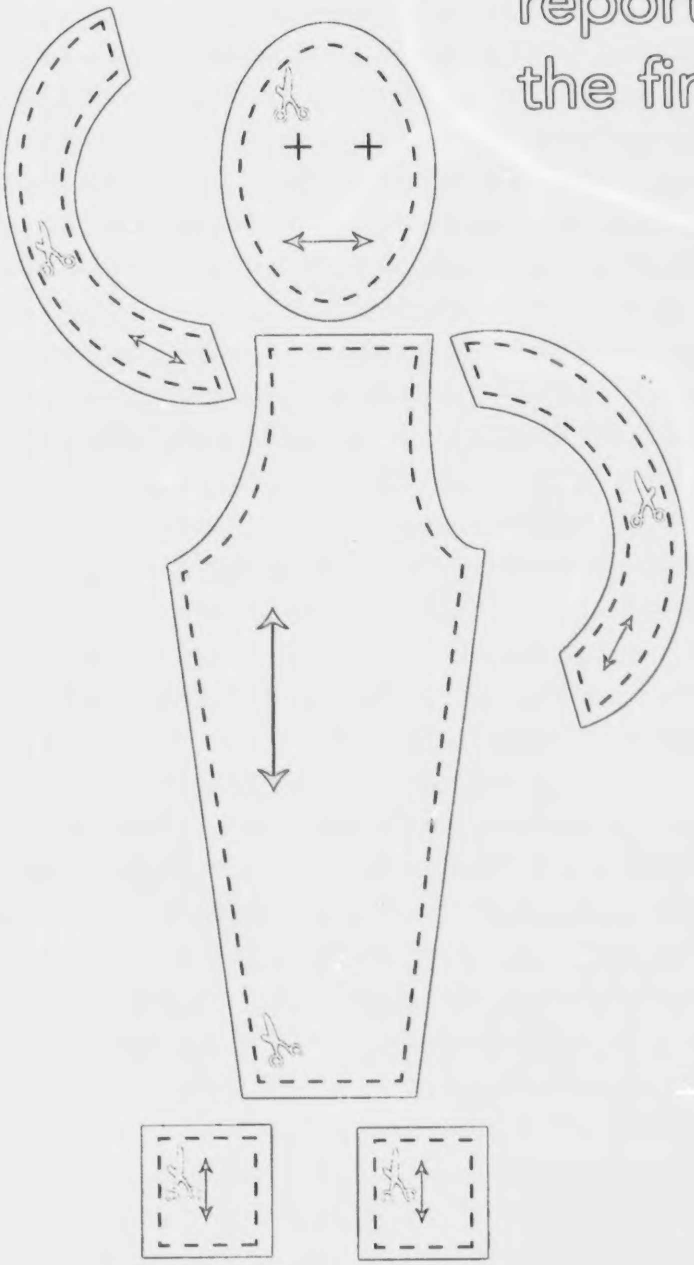
stage 9: reporting the findings



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Starting point:

Now you have made sense of the findings for yourself, you need to be able to communicate these findings effectively to those who need to know. This stage is primarily concerned with the production of an accessible and accurate written account of the evaluation, but also considers other ways in which people can find out about your work.

Questions to be considered:

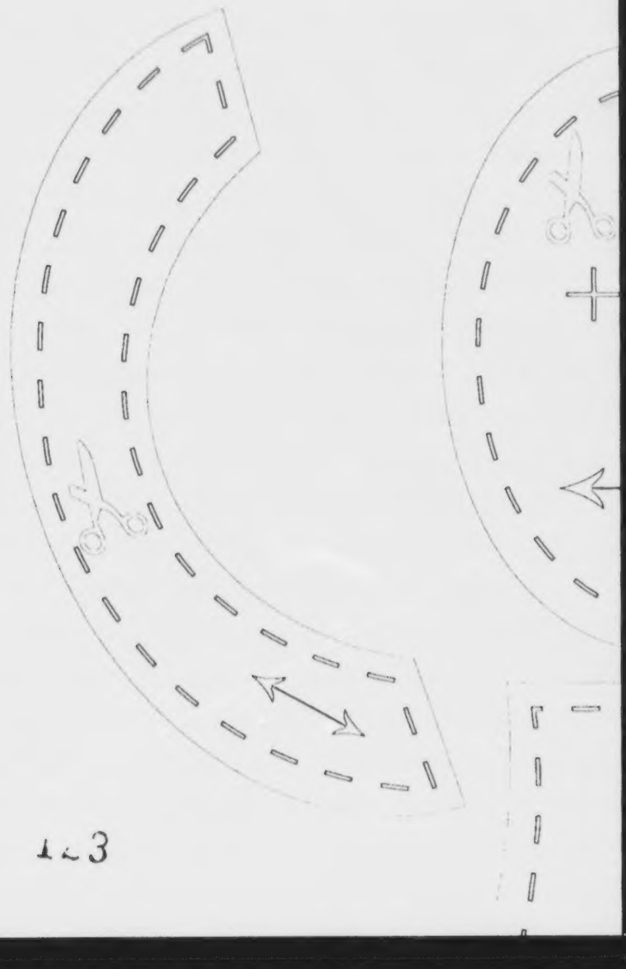
- Who needs to know about the findings?
- What do they need to know?
- When do they need to be told?
- What is the best way of informing them?

You may also want to look at:

- EVALUATION SUMMARY FORM

By the end of this stage you should have:

- Informed relevant stakeholders of your findings
- Produced a written report (if appropriate)
- Considered submitting details of your evaluation to PESF's data-bank



This stage should be regarded as integral to the evaluation – not an optional extra at the end.

9.1 Creating a written record

What you are aiming for is to create a useful record of the evaluation.

What to report

Your problem now may well be a matter of prioritising – it will probably not be appropriate or possible to include in your report everything that you have discovered. It will therefore be important to summarise the material and clearly highlight those aspects that are of most importance and significance; that is, those findings that directly address your evaluation questions, or those demanded in a certain form by funders or managers.

Don't forget that you need to include any negative findings, as well as the good news. There can be a temptation to leave 'uninteresting' findings out of reports, such as for example, the finding that there was no difference between male and female parents on a particular test. While you may feel this is disappointing or unexpected or just plain dull, it should still be mentioned if it is pertinent to your evaluation questions. After all, it may be of interest to others – it may prevent them wasting time on a similar study, or may give rise to other research questions. Obviously you don't need to dwell on such findings, but they should at least get a passing mention.

It is important to avoid over-interpretation or speculation about why the findings are as they are. Do not go beyond where the evidence takes you! There can be a strong temptation to do this, but it is not good practice.

Structuring your report

This assumes that your findings will be presented in written form. There is a standard format for reporting research findings, which you may wish to follow.

Background / introduction	Important background information to enable reader to put findings into context. This should contain some descriptive information about the project/service being evaluated and the background to the evaluation itself (when it took place, who did it, what the evaluation questions were) may also refer to the broader context including a round-up of relevant literature and previous research findings.
Methods	A description of how the evaluation was conducted. Refer to methods and instruments used, sampling issues (including response rates). This helps the reader to understand the findings, and assists those who may wish to conduct similar evaluations.
Findings	This will be the most substantial and interesting part of the report. It should be broken down into shorter sections (or chapters). This is where the results of the evaluation are revealed. Make sure the findings are presented in such a way that the evaluation questions are clearly addressed.
Conclusions / recommendations	The findings should be summarised and drawn together in the Conclusions section. Busy readers may turn straight to this page, so make sure it can stand alone if necessary. For some studies it will be appropriate to make recommendations. Be careful that they arise from the evidence that has been collected, and are not just the unsupported opinion of the evaluator.
Appendices	This is where more detailed technical information should be placed, so that it doesn't get in the way of the 'story' you are telling in the main body of the report. It is always a good idea to reproduce copies of questionnaires in an appendix.

Executive summary

In addition to the full report it is well worth producing a short summary of key points about the evaluation and its findings (maximum four sides of A4). This can be disseminated more widely (and economically) than a bulkier document, and is more likely to be read by busy people, or those intimidated by a more formal report.

Presentation and style

Your report should guide the reader naturally through your evaluation. Essentially you are simply telling a story, with a beginning (background) a middle (methods and findings) and an end (conclusions and recommendation).

Clarity

- Divide your material into digestible chunks with clear, descriptive headings and sub-headings.
- Make sure there is a contents page, so that those who want to cut to the chase (or to their particular area of interest) can find their way easily.
- Short simple sentences can often be the best way to communicate complex information. It may not be the most exciting literary style, but at least people will understand your point.

Accessibility

Do whatever you can to make your report lively and accessible, if you want it to have a wide readership. Here are some suggestions:

- Consider using pictures or cartoons to illustrate your main findings.
- If you are less artistic, but have collected some qualitative data, put some quotations in speech bubbles to liven up the page.
- Incorporate a case study or two. These can be an effective way of illustrating issues, by 'telling the story' of a particular individual or family. (You can combine data from a number of sources – referral forms, case files, interviews with parents, children, and staff – to build a rounded picture).

Presenting quantitative data

If you have quantitative data, a table of figures or a well-chosen chart (bar charts, pie charts etc) can be invaluable. These days basic computer software can produce these for you. Make sure all charts, diagrams and tables are clearly labelled and have an appropriate title. You will also need to draw the attention of the reader to your chart in the text, and point out what is interesting or important about it.

If your findings are expressed in percentage form, it is good practice also to report the base number on which the percentage has been calculated. If 90 per cent of your clients were satisfied with the service, the reader needs to know whether this was 90 per cent of 12 or 120. (In fact, it is not recommended to report percentages of numbers lower than about 50).

Using qualitative data

If you are using qualitative data for illustrative or illuminative purposes, don't just list all the responses you got – try and select quotes that sum up a particular viewpoint or express an interesting perspective. There is no necessity to select 'typical' quotes, if you are just using them to support quantitative findings.

Confidentiality and anonymity

Remember the agreements you made with respondents about confidentiality and anonymity, and ensure that the way in which you report findings does not breach this. You need to be particularly careful when using quotations – even if the report does not name individuals, it may nevertheless be possible to identify people by what they have said. Remember also that descriptions ("mother of seven", "black lone father") can sometimes also identify individuals. If in doubt check with the respondent and seek their permission.

9.2 Disseminating findings – spreading the word

Now that you are in possession of the findings of your evaluation, either as a formal written report, or in some other form, you need to think about how these findings can be used. Give some thought to communicating the findings:

- Who do you want to know?
- Who do you need to tell?
- What would be a good time to tell them?
- What is the best way of going about it?

Costs associated with reporting and dissemination

- Word processing of final report
- Stationery and photocopying
- Postage costs if you want to send out a large number of reports
- Other dissemination costs – eg organising a seminar, or other publicity events

Stakeholders

Feed back in an appropriate form to your primary stakeholders – in writing to a management committee, for example, in supervision or via a staff meeting to workers, perhaps using a newsletter or poster to families. Tell people what they need to know, in an interesting and appealing way. Be sensitive too – if there are negative findings to be relayed to staff, think about how this can best be done.

Wider interest groups

Locally

Think about who else might be interested in the findings. This could include possible referring agencies or individuals, potential users of the service, potential funders. If you have a mailing list, use a summary of the report to spread the word widely (those who are really interested can request the full report). Also consider local newspapers, networks or newsletters. You may want to make use of the opportunities offered by local networks or training events (or organise one yourself). Don't forget – the person who wrote the report need not be the person involved in dissemination. Could you find ways of involving other stakeholders, such as parents or children?

Further afield

Looking beyond your local community, do you have access to a website you could use? Or perhaps consider an article in an academic or practitioner journal?

Why not submit your evaluation to the Parenting Education & Support Forum to add to their data-bank? Fill in the blank EVALUATION SUMMARY FORM that is included in the Toolkit and also available on PESF's website, www.parenting-forum.org.uk Send your completed form to us with a copy of your report (if applicable).

Note down the details of your dissemination plan below:

Stakeholder or other interest group	*Form that dissemination will take (with approx dates)*

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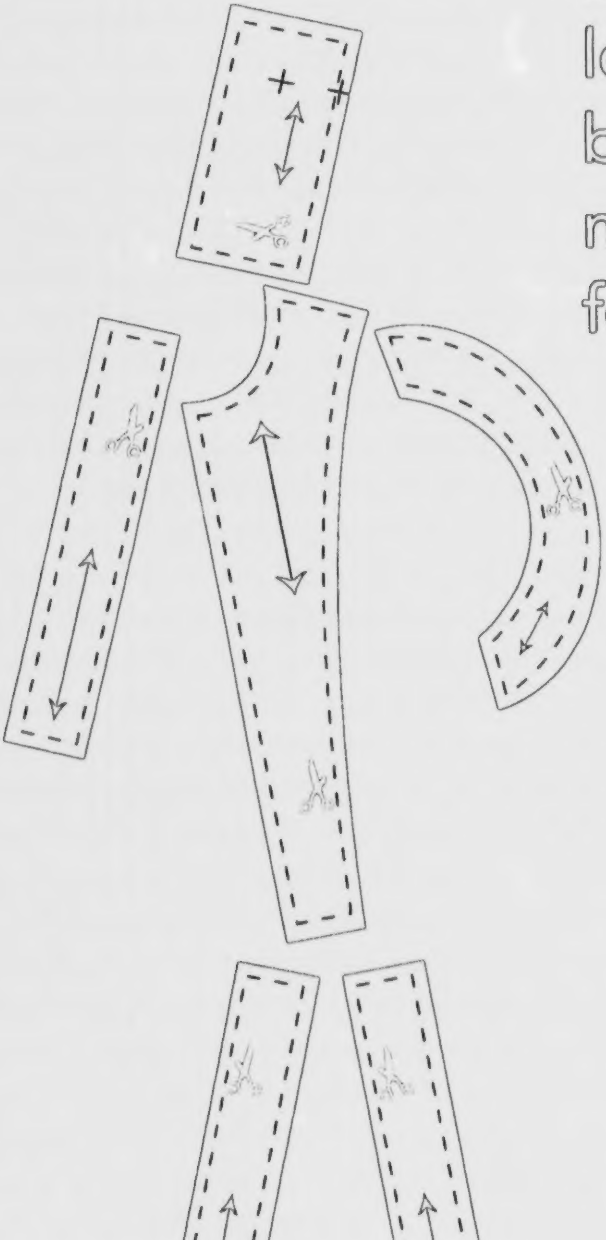
stage 10: looking back and moving forward



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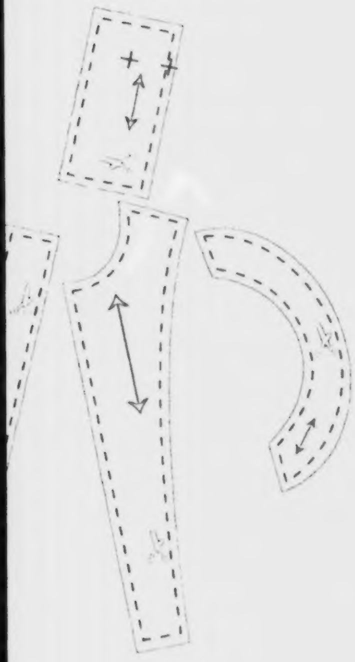
Starting point:



Although you have by now produced your report, and perhaps begun to disseminate the findings to a range of audiences, the evaluation process isn't quite over yet. This stage is about reviewing the whole process and using the findings.

Questions to be considered:
☐ Do the evaluation findings indicate that the service needs to be changed or developed in any way?
☐ What ideas do we have for future evaluation or further research?
☐ How helpful has the Toolkit been?
☐ How could it be improved?
☐ Back to stage 1?

You may also want to look at:
☐ CASE STUDIES
☐ FEEDBACK FORM

By the end of this stage you should have:
☐ Considered making changes to your practice or service
☐ Generated further evaluation ideas or questions
☐ Completed and returned your FEEDBACK FORM

It is important not to lose momentum at this point. Much of the evaluative effort will be wasted if the findings are not properly used or acted upon, either by yourself, or by others.

10.1 Reflection

Take some time to digest what the evaluation is telling you. Face up to your findings and start to think about how they can be used constructively. Be prepared to learn the lessons that need to be learned. You may wish to engage other stakeholders in this process.

Reflect on the findings

What has the evaluation really told you about your programme or service?

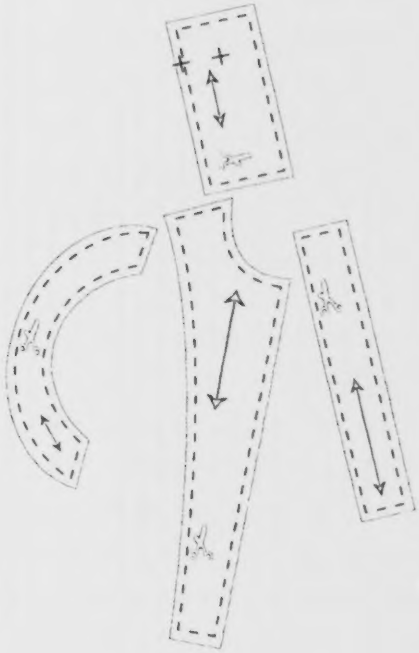
- Perhaps your findings are a little too good to be true?

Congratulations, you are clearly doing something right … but it is still worth thinking about possible bias in your methods. Did you ask the right people the right questions? What are you doing right and how can you keep doing it?

- On the other hand, maybe the evaluation paints a depressing picture?

Try to keep a balanced view. It can be easy for those close to a service to let a few negative findings overshadow a largely positive picture. But equally, don't sweep the negative under the carpet or try to 'explain it away'.

- What unanswered questions remain, in terms of inconclusive findings? What additional questions do you wish you had asked? This could help you start thinking about your next evaluation!



Reflect on the process

What was the evaluation experience like?

- What went well? What went less well, and why? Bear in mind it is quite unusual for evaluations to go strictly according to plan, so some glitches and slip-ups are par for the course.
- What did stakeholders get from the experience (positives and negatives)? Think about the experiences of those who were actually involved in doing the evaluation (planning and managing, collecting data, analysis, reporting and dissemination), and of those who were involved as providers of data (parents, children, staff).
- What have you (and others) learned from the evaluation experience? New skills? Planning insights? The value of systematic monitoring? The resourcefulness of staff, parents or volunteers?
- With the benefit of hindsight …how would you go about things differently?

Reflect on the role of the Toolkit

A FEEDBACK FORM has been included in the Toolkit in the **CORE DOCUMENTS** section, and is also available on the PESF website www.parenting-forum.org.uk We will use the feedback from users to help us to improve and update the Toolkit, ensuring it is of greater relevance and utility to parenting projects. The Toolkit will be updated regularly, so your comments and contributions really will count.

- Please photocopy, complete and return your FEEDBACK FORM (return details are on the form), keeping the original in the Toolkit for future reference and use.
- Alternatively download the electronic version from the website and return to us by post or email.

10.2 Acting

And what implications do the findings have for the future direction of the project or service, or for your own practice?

- Consider changes that may be indicated – but don't throw the baby out with the bathwater. If there were criticisms or negative comments, note whether they came from particular sub-groups, or were about specific elements of the service.
- Think about how you can use positive findings to improve and maybe extend your service.
- Think about which recommendations you wish to prioritise (or which you can afford to implement). This may be a matter of tweaking, retargeting, pruning, extending or a complete overhaul.

The costs of making such changes may seem prohibitive, but the good news is that, having conducted your evaluation, you will be in a far better position to argue the case for additional funding. Your evaluation will constitute valuable evidence!

And when you have made these changes, how will you go about evaluating them?

Ah, now there's a question …

Before packing away the Toolkit until next time, you may wish to note down some reflections, and ideas for action and future evaluation:

What changes should be made to the service or programme based on our findings?	
What has been learned about evaluation?	
What other lessons have been learned?	
What should we definitely do differently next time?	
What new evaluation ideas or questions have been raised?	
What has been the single best thing about the whole experience?	

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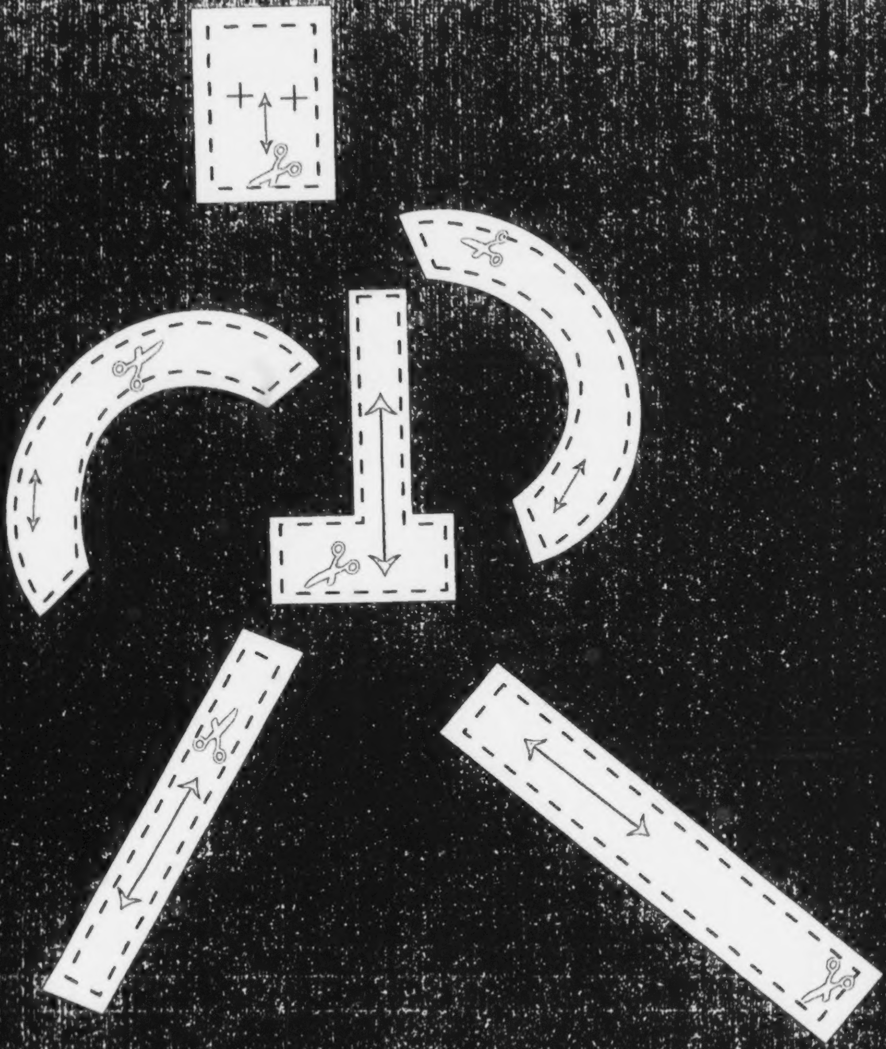
case studies



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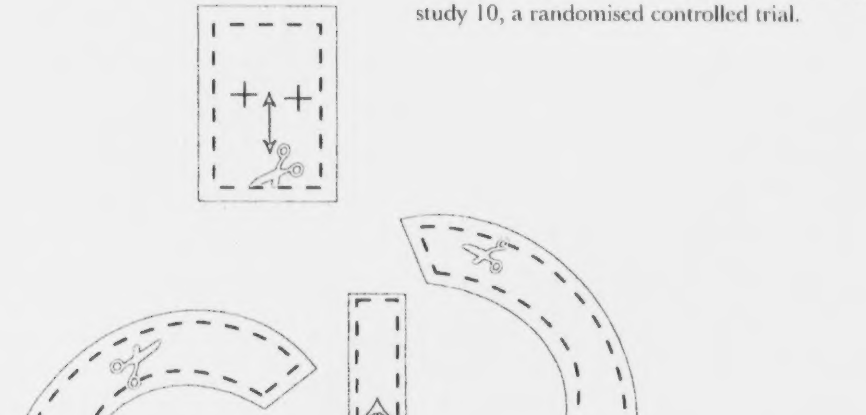
case studies

Ten case studies of real evaluations have been included in order to illustrate the range of possibilities. These are not necessarily 'typical' evaluations, nor have they been selected as demonstrations of best practice, nor do they necessarily provide strong evidence of effectiveness. They have been selected to demonstrate as broad a range as possible of settings, evaluation questions, methods, approaches, levels of complexity and practical problems encountered. Where possible we have selected fairly recent examples, and provided references or contact information so that you can obtain the original reports. A commentary accompanies each case study, highlighting points of methodological or practical interest.

They are presented in (approximate) order of complexity, starting with self-evaluation approaches using very simple designs and culminating with case study 10, a randomised controlled trial.



1. Simple feedback and reflection on a peer-education programme

	Details of evaluation	*Commentary*
Summary	Minimal self-evaluation of a peer-education sex education programme for parents.	*Basic evaluation using post-training feedback forms only.*
Project details	Parents Together is a Sheffield-based project that trains groups of volunteer parents to run sessions for other parents in ways of talking to their children about sex.	
Evaluator and funding details	Limited self-evaluation takes place routinely as part of the programme, and findings are reported and reflected upon in programme reports.	*This is a small-scale project, all too aware of the limitations placed on evaluation scope and design by a lack of resources.*
Evaluation approach and methods	Feedback sheets are used at the end of each training course – training for peer-educators and training delivered by peer-educators to parents in the community.	*It is clear also that project monitoring takes place. The report notes the ethnic and gender mix of recruits, and comments on attendance at training courses.*
Findings	• Parents in the community report a high level of satisfaction with the course • Parents wanted more sessions in order to cover subjects in greater depth (1) • Peer-educators need to conduct sessions as soon as possible after completing their training; otherwise they are liable to drop out of the project	*(1) a four-week course has been developed to meet this need. Evaluation findings have been used to improve practice.*
Next steps	At the time of writing the phase 2 report, the need to secure additional funding and resources for the project was paramount.	*In such a climate, developing more elaborate evaluation procedures is unlikely to be a high priority.*
Reference	Report on phase 2 of the project by Boo Spurgeon, Liz Wilson and Jane Fenelon	*Available from:* *Parents Together* *C/o Sheffield Centre for HIV and sexual health* *22 Collegiate Crescent, Sheffield S10 2BA* *tel: 0114 226 1900 Price: £3*

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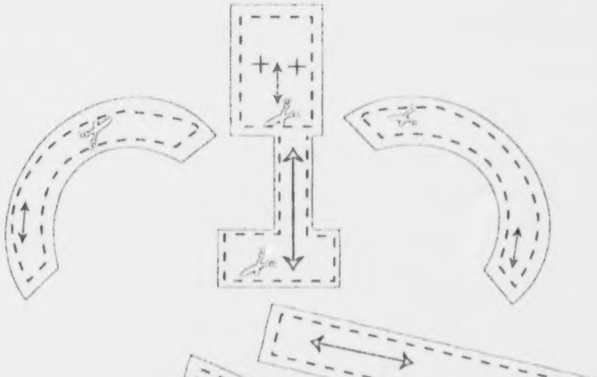
2: Self-evaluation of a group approach to positive parenting

	Details of evaluation	Commentary
Summary	Evaluation of seven groups, individually tailored to meet members needs, but sharing a common ethos.	*Basic evaluation: small scale, data collected from parents only, at one point in time.*
Project details	'First Steps' groups are provided to meet the needs of isolated parents experiencing difficulties in the parenting of their one and two year-olds. Referrals can be made by health visitors, GPs, social workers and self-referral (according to broad criteria). Groups are run by 2 health visitors. Groups can run indefinitely, and may be open or closed according to the group's preference. At the time of the evaluation there were seven groups running in East Kent.	
Evaluator and funding details	Not explicitly stated in the article, but would appear to be self-evaluation by health visitors.	*It seems unlikely that additional resources were available for evaluation.*
Evaluation approach and methods	Data collection was limited to eliciting the views of parents, using questionnaires and individual interviews with parents. This took place in five of the groups, interviews being conducted by an independent person (1)	*(1) One way of accessing such an 'independent' person would be for facilitators of two groups to act as independent interviewers for each other. This would achieve a degree of independence at little cost.*
	Data gathered included background information about the parents, how they described themselves before joining the group, what they wanted from the group, changes they saw in themselves, and how the group could be improved.	*(2) Data was sought by staff in order to discover the characteristics and perceived needs of the group, as well as evidence of effectiveness*

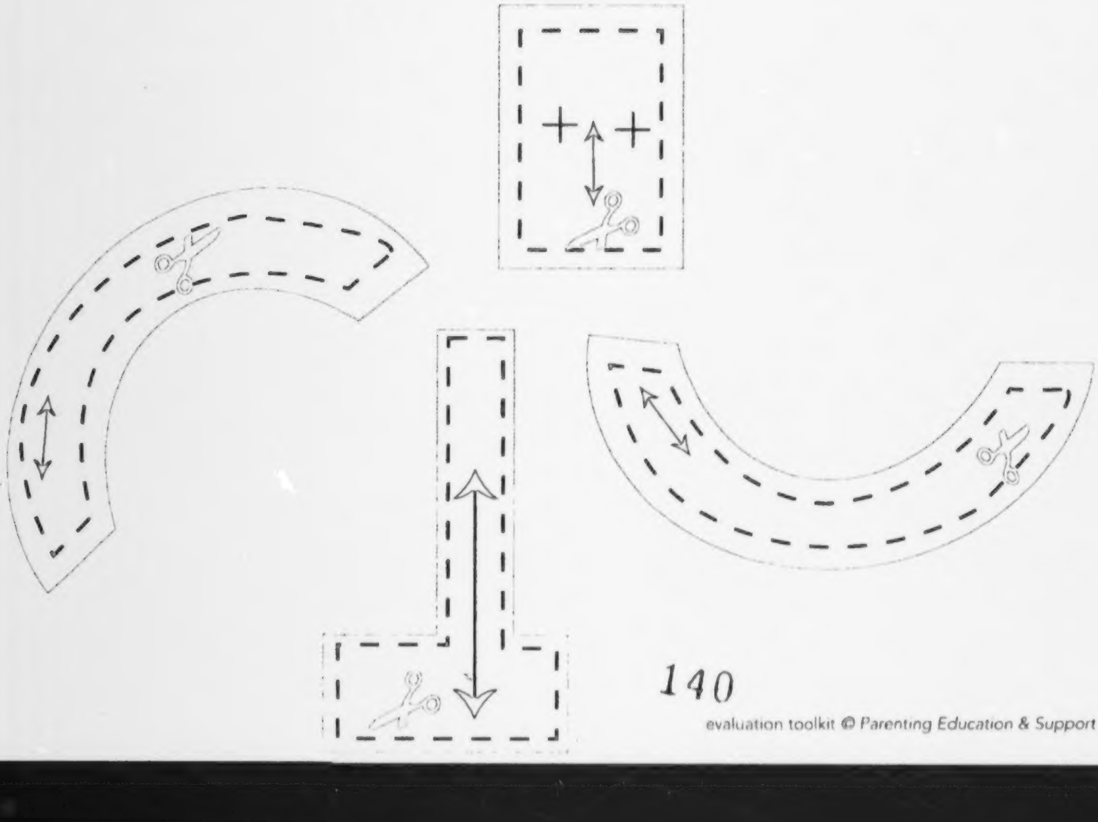
	Details of evaluation	***Commentary***
Findings	• The evaluation revealed some surprises in terms of group characteristics (3) • It confirmed that First Steps groups provide an opportunity to discuss the issues of concern to parents • A range of positive benefits were identified • Suggestions for improvements were made	*(3) Assumptions that the groups were predominantly for young first-time mothers were challenged by the evaluation findings. These recommendations arise directly from the findings of the evaluation.*
Next steps	Four recommendations were made as a result of the evaluation: • to increase number of groups, and open to any parent experiencing difficulties • to improve the environment in which groups are held • to reduce waiting lists • to raise awareness of the groups among other professionals	*These recommendations arise directly from the findings of the evaluation.* *The authors acknowledge that there are funding implications, particularly in terms of environmental improvements and facilities offered.*
Reference	May, H., Hamilton, J. & Elderkin, H (1999) 'Group support for parenting skills: taking First Steps', Community practitioner, 72, 4 pp 86-87	



3: Self-evaluation of a small pilot project

	Details of evaluation	***Commentary***
Summary	Evaluation of pilot parenting course delivered by health visitors.	*Basic evaluation: small-scale project, simple tools.*
Project details	Learning package 'Pram to Primary' developed by Family Caring Trust. Piloted by health visitors from East Kent Community Healthcare Trust during 1997. Ten mothers with children under six attended a seven-week course, led by health visitors.	
Evaluator and funding details	Health visitors designed questionnaire themselves.	
Evaluation approach and methods	All participants who completed the course (eight) were interviewed individually by an independent person. The questionnaire contained a mixture of open and closed questions covering the following subjects: • Background demographic data (age, marital status, number and age of children, accommodation, employment, financial status) • Perceptions of the course and practical arrangements • Parenting practices and attitudes • Multiple choice questions to measure learning from the course	*An example of how a lot of different types of data (possibly addressing different evaluation questions) can be collected using a single questionnaire.*
Findings	• Course arrangements and venue were satisfactory to parents • Most parents reported positive changes in understanding and interaction with their children • Parents found it useful to be able to talk problems over with other group members • They liked ice-breaker games, but found role-play difficult	

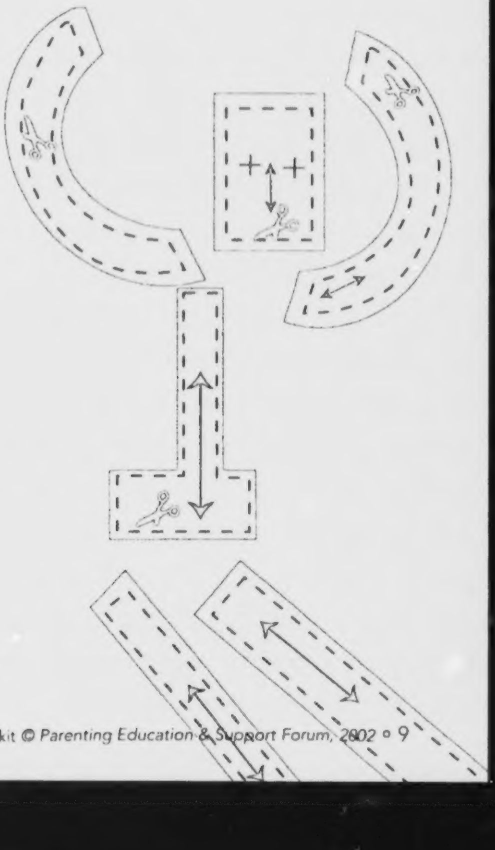
	Details of evaluation	***Commentary***
Next steps	• Intention to follow up this group six months later, in order to assess longer-term effects. • For subsequent groups, to present questionnaire at start of course also, in order to gather baseline data. Also considering gathering the following data to measure longer-term impact: • Health visitor perceptions of change • Use of primary medical services • Accident and emergency attendance • Mother's self-esteem	*Doing this evaluation has generated many ideas for extending and improving evaluation in the future.*
Reference	Fielden, I & Parker, A (2000) 'From pram to primary school: evaluating a course for parents' in Community Practitioner, vol 73, 5, pp 605-7	



4. Collaborative evaluation of pilot programme

	Details of evaluation	***Commentary***
Summary	Evaluation of a project piloting parenting materials with three community groups.	*Basic evaluation: involving external evaluators, but very simple design and tools.*
Project details	The Hackney Parenting Project piloted Parenting, a rough guide (NSPCC) with three community groups, during 1999. One was a pre-existing group of young mothers, another was a new group recruited by a Health Visitor and Family Worker. The third group was an Asian Women's Group.	*In the event, the timing of the programme for Asian Women and the evaluation did not coincide, so the evaluation focuses on the other two groups.*
Evaluator and funding details	The evaluation was part of a wider collaborative venture between community psychology in Hackney and the Psychology Department of the University of East London (who carried out the evaluation).	
Evaluation approach and methods	The purpose of the evaluation was two-fold: to evaluate the use of the materials, and the effectiveness of the courses as a whole. Because of the small numbers involved, mainly qualitative methods were used: • End of session feedback forms for participants and group leaders • End of course summary evaluation forms for participants and group leaders • Post-course 'secret ballot' form to collect quantitative data from participants • Post-course focus groups for participants and group leaders • Telephone interview with project co-ordinator Group leaders were asked to hand out and collect forms.	*Some forms were returned without dates or topics marked on, so couldn't be related to specific sessions. For some sessions no feedback forms were returned at all. The reasons for this are not stated in the report, but this highlights an area of difficulty arising when the evaluator is reliant on the goodwill and understanding of project staff.*

	Details of evaluation	*Commentary*
Findings	• All parents found the sessions to be very or fairly useful • Nearly all were able to cite examples of approaches and techniques they had begun to use as a result of the course • Group leaders reported they had insufficient time to cover materials	*Despite the small numbers of participants and gaps in the data, it was possible to reach fairly firm conclusions. This was made possible by the triangulation of data, and multiple perspectives employed in the evaluation design.*
Next steps	• It was hoped that the evaluation findings would be used to inform any revision of the Rough Guide. • The co-ordinator regarded the evaluation report as a discussion document in its own right, to be used for future planning.	
Reference	'An evaluation of the piloting of the NSPCC Parenting, a rough guide programme carried out in the L.B. Hackney 1999'. Report co-ordinated by Professor Sheila Wolfendale, January 2000.	*Full report available from Professor Sheila Wolfendale at the University of East London.* *S.Wolfendale@uel.ac.uk*



5. Small-scale project with limited resources

	Details of evaluation	***Commentary***
Summary	Evaluation of the first 18-months of a project supporting families with a mentally ill parent.	*Basic evaluation: small-scale evaluation employing multiple data sources and informants.*
Project details	Staffed by part-time co-ordinator and three part-time / sessional family aides. Annual budget £38k. Activities: Intensive work with families (19 families over an 18-month period); running practice forums to increase inter-agency co-operation; Young carers group.	*Very small-scale project with limited resources and small numbers of users.*
Evaluator and funding details	Self-evaluation, with support of Service Manager (Project sought funding for independent evaluation, but initial application was unsuccessful.)	*Project decided that limited self-evaluation was better than nothing.* *Subsequently raised £4,000 for external evaluation.*
Evaluation approach and methods	• Adapted and developed anonymised monitoring forms for referrals; • Outcome data was gathered from case-notes / discussions / summaries plus questionnaires to staff, users and referrers • Young carers group evaluated through group feedback plus anonymous questionnaire; also informal feedback from group leaders. • Questionnaires to practice forum participants	*Simple activities, making use of existing sources of information wherever possible. Note triangulation of data (several sources for outcome data) and multiple perspectives (information sought from staff, users, referrers, forum participants etc)*

	Details of evaluation	*Commentary*
Findings	• Reported that direct work was 'well-received by users with positive feedback', and that referrers were satisfied with the services (1) • Analysis of outcomes (from case documents) – reported improvements in all families worked with for any length of time (2) • Young carers expressed great satisfaction with the groups, wanted them to continue, and to keep in touch with group members • Good feedback from practice forums	*(1) Report relies to a certain extent on feedback from outwith the evaluation (newspaper interview with user, thank-you cards etc). This is because very few questionnaires were returned by parents or professionals* *(2) Anonymised records analysed by Service Manager*
Next steps	Intention that the external evaluator will do the following: • Gather views on the service provided from perspective of users, referrers and providers (3) • Possible use of standardised tools to measure changes in parents and children (4) • Possible interviews with professionals on subject of inter-agency co-ordination.	*Complements evaluation activities already undertaken.* *(3) Note use of independent evaluator to gather views on services* *(4) Standardised tools may require specialist expertise (in administration and/or analysis)*
Reference	The Luton Building Bridges Service – report on the first eighteen months	*Report will be available from:* *Family Welfare Association* *501-505 Kingsland Road* *London E8 4AU* *020 7254 6251*

6. Process and outcome evaluation of an innovative intervention

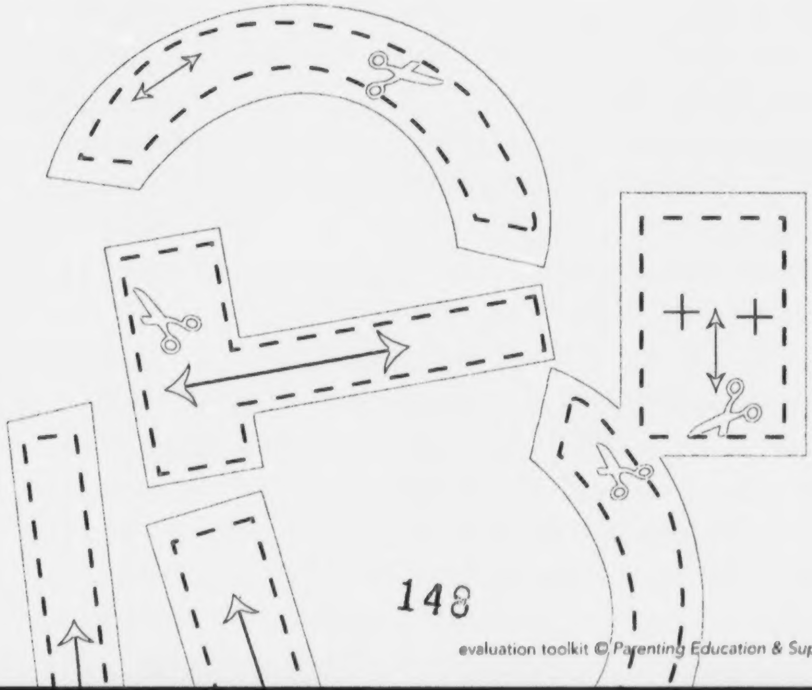
	Details of evaluation	Commentary
Summary	Evaluation of three types of parent support service offered in a school setting.	*Intermediate level evaluation: large scale, but straightforward methodology.*
Project details	Three different support services were offered to parents of year 8 pupils (age 12/13) in a school in Gillingham, Kent during 1997/98. The three services were i) reading materials about adolescence, ii) an 8-session 'Living with Teenagers' course and iii) individual help and advice from a Parent Advisor based at the school. The services were all provided by the Trust for the Study of Adolescence (TSA).	
Evaluator and funding details	In addition to providing the interventions, the TSA also conducted an evaluation. The interventions and evaluation were funded by Kent Social Services and the Carnegie UK Trust.	
Evaluation approach and methods	The evaluation looked at both process and impact. Data was collected before the intervention started, and again at the end of the project using the following methods: • individual structured interviews with parents • self-completion questionnaires for parents and year 8 pupils • data monitoring relating to parents' use of services • interviews with school staff and service providers	*It is particularly important that the evaluation of new or innovative services include a process element. Lessons can be learned for replication.*

	Details of evaluation	***Commentary***
Findings	• 70% of families used at least one of the services. Most use was made by those whose child was experiencing problems in school. Talking to the Parent Advisor was the favoured option for these parents. (1) • 12 parents attended Living with Teenagers courses; the facilitators experienced these courses as being difficult and demanding (2) • The Parent Advisor had few contacts until she telephoned parents to introduce herself (3) • After the project parents reported feeling better informed and supported, and were less likely to report worries about their child • However, there was an increase in those who felt that their child was now more difficult to parent, and in those who found their behaviour difficult to understand (4) • The overwhelming majority of parents were very positive about the project.	*A range of process findings, derived from a range of data sources (monitoring, interviews, questionnaires).* *(1) Different interventions suit different needs.* *(2) The facilitators' perspective will be important in interpreting outcome data relating to these groups.* *(3) May be useful to know this when setting up similar services* *(4) Need not be seen as a negative finding – the young people in question are now a year older and exhibiting different behaviour.*
Next steps	The report makes a large number of recommendations about setting up, running and evaluating similar interventions in the future.	
Reference	Roker, D., Coleman, J., Kidger, J. & Richardson, H (1999) A report on the 'Living with teenagers ... supporting parents' project (summary)	*Full report available from:* *Trust for the Study of Adolescence* *23 New Road* *Brighton BN1 1W2* *01273 693 311*

7. Process and impact evaluation of a parenting project

	Details of evaluation	***Commentary***
Summary	Evaluation of a multi-agency parenting project in Bolsover, Derbyshire.	*Intermediate/advanced evaluation: includes use of standardised tests and statistical analysis.*
Project details	The Living With Children (LWC) project is funded by the North Derbyshire Health Authority. It provides parenting courses consisting of six sessions delivered by two trained facilitators from different agencies (community education, Homestart, social services and health visitors). Creche, transport and lunch are provided for participants.	
Evaluator and funding details	The article describing the evaluation was co-authored by the project co-ordinator and a research assistant from the health authority.	*We assume that the research assistant carried out some or all of the data collection and analysis.*
Evaluation approach and methods	Eight LWC courses were included in the evaluation, which had two strands: process (relating to the project's targets and facilitators' views about their role) and impact (relating to two of the project's key aims). Data collection included: • Monitoring data from administrative records and client profiles (1) • Two standardised tests (Coopersmith SEI and Parenting Stress Inventory) were administered to parents before and after each course (2) • Focus groups were conducted with five of the groups (3) • Interviews with LWC facilitators (4)	*(1) Making use of existing data sources* *(2) No control or comparison group, so changes cannot be attributed to effects of the course* *(3) An efficient way of obtaining qualitative data from parents about the course, as a supplement to the quantitative standardised data collected* *(4) These interviews focused on process issues relating to running the groups, support from the host agency, how the facilitator role fitted with their other work, and ways in which the programme could be improved*

	Details of evaluation	*Commentary*
Findings	• Statistically significant improvement in self-esteem and decrease in stress (5) • Courses were well-received by parents, and positive changes described • Both parents and facilitators would prefer a longer course • Author concludes that project is meeting its key aims and targets and represents good value for money	*(5) Using statistical techniques to show that these improvements were highly unlikely to have occurred by chance.*
Next steps	The evaluation highlighted areas for further research, including • Follow-up of participants • Evaluating a further two of the project's key aims (6) • Eliciting the views of children	*(6) Note that it is not necessary to address all of a project's key aims or objectives in a single evaluation.*
Reference	Langley, J & Mudge, K (1998) 'Successful parenting: how to live with children', Community practitioner 1998; 71, 9, 289-291	



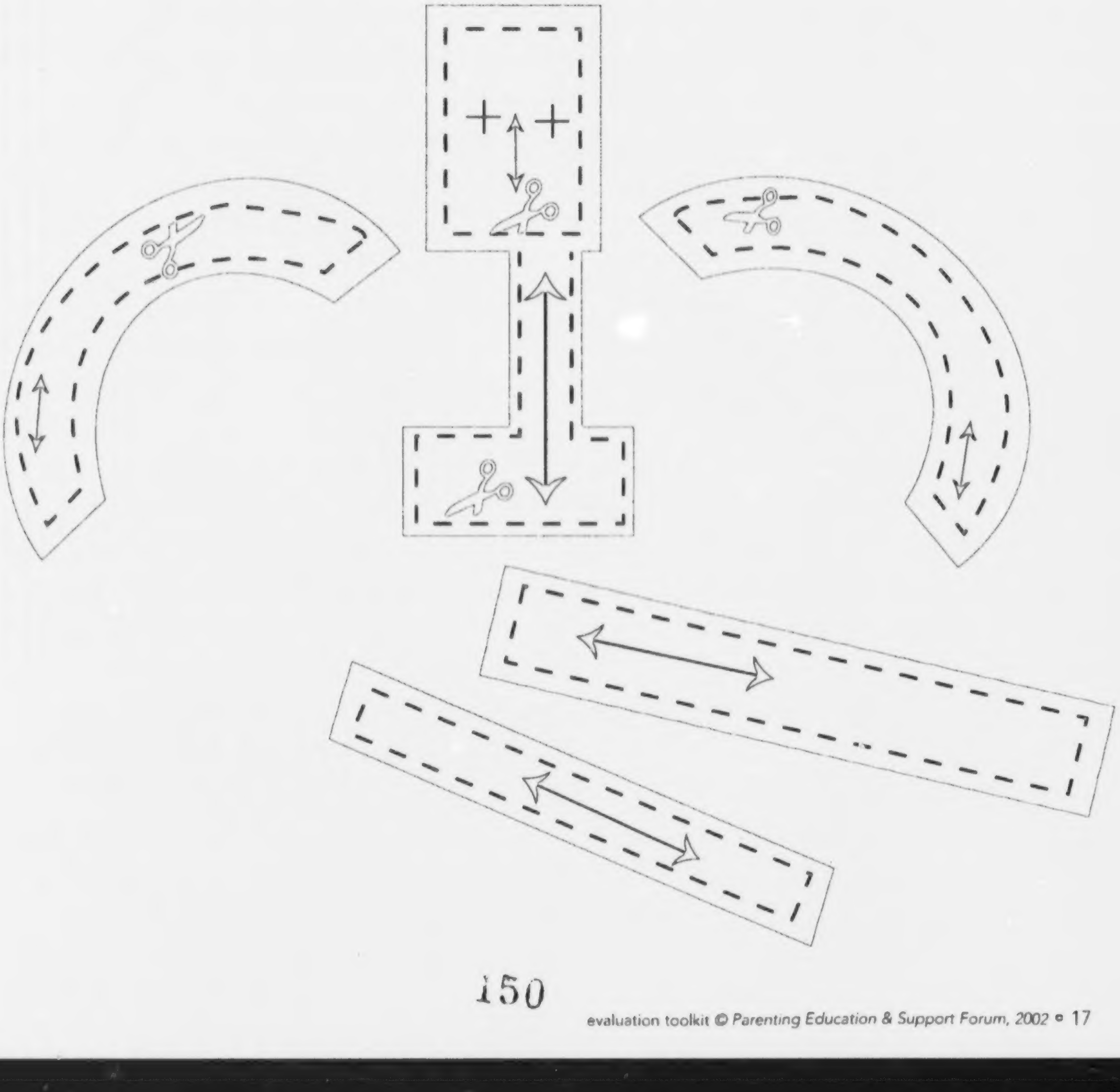
8. Costs and outcomes study

	Details of evaluation	**Commentary**
Summary	Costs and outcomes study of support services for families of children in need.	*Intermediate/Advanced evaluation: complex design, liaison with a range of agencies, use of standardised measures.*
Project details	Evaluation compares provision in two neighbouring local authorities in North Wales. A focus of the study was an innovative child-minder service, operating in one of the counties.	
Evaluator and funding details	Thomas Coram Research Unit, Institute of Education, London. Evaluation funded by the Wales Office of Research and Development	
Evaluation approach and methods	• Case survey of all families receiving services in each authority on a particular day (1) • Comparative study of high-need families from each authority • Outcome measures: GHQ and Family Problems Questionnaire, plus social worker assessment • Data also collected on amount of service use, and unit costs of services (2)	*(1) One method of selecting a sample.* *(2) Requires liaison with range of local authority staff* *On the face of it, a well-designed study, comparing similar families in receipt of a differing range of services. However, as so often happens in evaluation of social programmes, things did not go entirely to plan (see below)*
Findings	• Services provided in each county were very similar • Costs of services were also similar • Well-being of parents improved in both counties • No statistically significant association was found between types of service, costs and improvements in well-being • Improvements were less likely for families referred because of financial problems or drug misuse, or whose problems were very severe.	*Analysis was limited because throughput of cases was lower than anticipated.* *Shortly after the study commenced, the innovative child-minder service was reviewed and the local authority drastically curtailed its use of the service, leaving provision in the two localities very similar.* *Over-stretched local authority staff were unable to provide all the unit cost data requested by the evaluators*

Details of evaluation

Reference

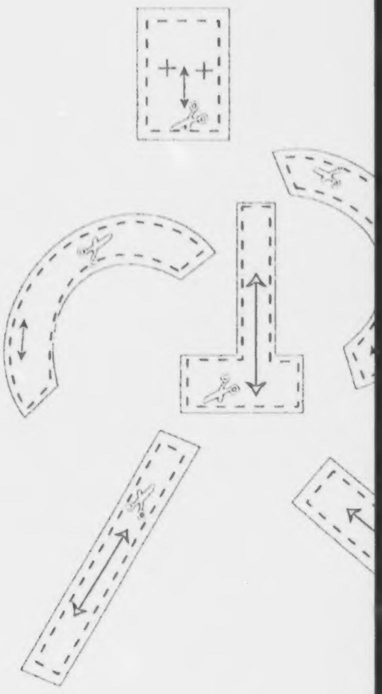
Statham, J., Holterman, S. & Winter, G (2001) 'Supporting Families: A comparison of outcomes and economic evaluation of services for children in need in two local authorities in Wales'. London: Institute of Education, London.



9. Outcome evaluation using a comparison group

	Details of evaluation	***Commentary***
Summary	Outcome evaluation of Parent-Link, a form of parenting support developed by Parent Network.	*Advanced level: large-scale evaluation with complex design and analysis.*
Project details	Parent-Link courses consist of 13 loosely-structured sessions, led by trained parent co-ordinators. There are accompanying booklets for parents to read between sessions. Usually, parents are charged for courses and training. Ten Parent-Link courses were involved in the evaluation (94 parents took part)	*As most parents had to pay for their courses, there was a high proportion of participants with A levels or above. It may prove more difficult to use the same methodology (high volume of self-completion questionnaires) with other groups.*
Evaluator and funding details	Independent evaluation conducted by Academic Unit of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Psychology at Guy's Hospital, London. The evaluation was funded for one year by the Artemis Charitable Trust.	
Evaluation approach and methods	The researchers predicted a number of generalised outcomes for parents attending the courses. Questionnaires were administered before and after the course (1). A comparison group (2) was identified and given the same questionnaires. The following measures were used: • Child Behaviour Checklist • General Health Questionnaire • Family Grid • Parental Attitude Questionnaire • Parenting Stress Index (short form) A course feedback questionnaire was also devised for the Parent-Link group.	*The questionnaires were long and detailed, taking around 50 minutes to complete.* *(1) Because of drop-outs, refusals and failures to complete one or other of the questionnaires, there is only full data from 59 out of the original 94 parents.* *(2) The fact that the two groups were not randomly allocated, posed some methodological problems for the research. It was necessary to exclude some parents from particular analyses in order to ensure that the Parent-Link and comparison groups were well matched.*

	Details of evaluation	*Commentary*
Findings	• Positive perception of course content, format and co-ordinator (3) • Reduction in reported behavioural problems • Reduction in parental anxiety/insomnia • Increase in parental self-esteem • Improved family relationships • Reduction in strictness/over-protectiveness, conflict and authoritarian parenting • Reduction in stress (for those with high scores at outset)	*(3) This finding is from the feedback questionnaire and relates only to the Parent-link group.* *All other findings are from analysis of the standardised tests, and are statistically significant. Corresponding changes were not found in the comparison group.*
Next steps	The researchers suggest several avenues for future research and evaluation including: • Looking at actual (rather than reported) changes in behaviour of parents and children • Longer-term follow-up of participants • Replication of the study with families from lower socio-economic background • Evaluation of the training and support provided for Co-ordinators	
Reference	Davis, H & Hester, P (1996) An independent evaluation of Parent-Link: a parenting education programme. London: Parent Network	



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10. A randomised controlled trial

	Details of evaluation	***Commentary***
Summary	Evaluation of a primary-care based parent-training programme.	*Advanced evaluation: randomised controlled trial using of a range of standardised tests.*
Project details	The Webster-Stratton programme is delivered in a general practice setting by health visitors who have received special training.	*Well-established parent training programme (programme integrity).*
Evaluator and funding details	A team from the Health Services Research Unit (HSRU), Department of Public Health, University of Oxford Evaluation funded by NHS Executive – South East	*Independent evaluation by team of specialist academic researchers.*
Evaluation approach and methods	• Random selection of parents (118 in total) into intervention and control group (1) • Intervention group receive parent-training, control group receive no intervention (2) • Outcome measures: child behaviour, maternal anxiety, depression, self-esteem (3) • Follow-ups at 6 and 12 months (3)	*(1) Random selection ensures that the two groups do not differ from each other in any systematic way (differences are randomised between the groups). Differing outcomes for the 2 groups can therefore be attributed to the intervention itself.* *(2) Sometimes control groups receive an alternative intervention; some designs involve more than one control or comparison group.* *(3) Use of standardised tests, repeated at several points in time.*
Findings	• 6-month follow up of first groups show positive findings in terms of child behaviour, and maternal depression and anxiety • 12-month follow-up data not yet available at time of writing	*Early findings can be reported while study is still in progress.*
Reference	Paper in preparation at time of writing	*Study described briefly in HSRU Annual report, 2000* *Health Services Research Unit* *Institute of Health Sciences* *Old Road, Headington Oxford OX3 7LF* *tel: 01865 226 710*

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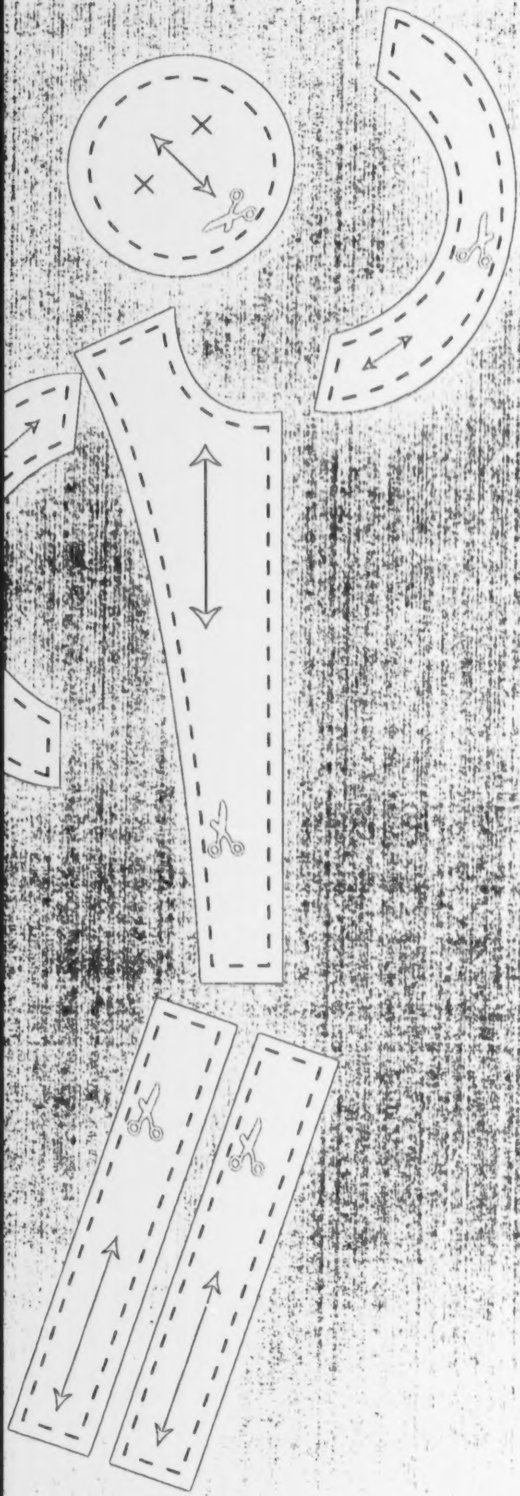
external evaluators



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If you are considering commissioning external evaluators you may find this section of assistance. Remember, the involvement of external evaluators need not be an 'all or nothing' decision. You can employ professionals in a consultancy role, or to undertake a specified element of the evaluation only.

1. When to involve external evaluators?

There are a number of circumstances when the use of external specialists is indicated:

- If an independent evaluation is required. Sometimes this is stipulated as a condition of grant.
- If you have lots of funding and ambitious evaluation plans.
- If you require specialist advice or expertise for a particular element of your evaluation. For example, you may want someone to facilitate and report on a series of focus groups, or to analyse the results of standardised tests.
- If you require some generalised support or consultancy. For example, if you need help in planning a manageable and realistic 'do-it-yourself' evaluation, or some assistance in designing questionnaires.

2. Where to find them

Both the Parenting Education & Support Forum and National Children's Bureau run a consultancy service and can advise on external evaluation. Other useful starting places might be:

- universities and other academic institutions
- independent research institutes
- the larger national charities, which often have research departments
- ask around – other local projects may be able to recommend evaluators
- authors of research or evaluation reports in related fields

3. Roles – independent evaluator or evaluation consultant?

This will depend on what you want out of the process, and how much you can afford. The distinction can be quite blurred. Either way, you should ensure that you are involved in discussions and negotiations regarding evaluation questions and research design, and kept informed of progress.

Independent evaluation

Do you want – or are you required – to hand the whole evaluation job over? If the evaluation needs to be conducted in total independence from your organisation, it will be necessary to engage an independent evaluator. This is the more expensive option, but the objectivity it brings means that the findings may be more useful as a tool of persuasion. Be aware that independent researchers or academics may wish to publish the evaluation report and /or other articles based on the evaluation data.

Evaluation consultancy

Alternatively, do you want advice, guidance or a helping hand? If so, buy in evaluation expertise on a consultancy basis. You or your organisation will have to contribute to a greater or lesser extent to the work of the evaluation, but you will retain overall control. The extent to which the consultants are involved in the planning, data collection and analysis and reporting can be as little or as much as you want and your budget allows. Their report will be confidential.

4. Selection process

It is worth talking to more than one potential evaluator or organisation before making a decision. You will undoubtedly encounter a range of different approaches and styles in the process, some of which are likely to be more appropriate to your organisation and the job in hand than others.

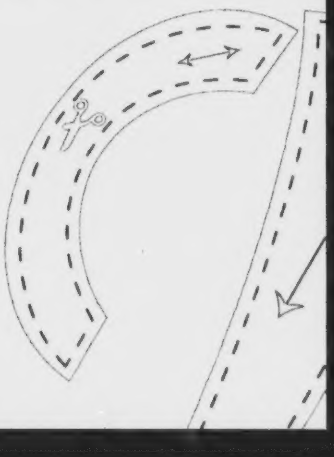
You will need to ensure potential evaluators have a good understanding of your project or service, and of your evaluation requirements. This could include some or all of the following:

- Background information about the project.
- A clear statement of aims and objectives.
- Your budget and timescale.
- What you want to find out from the evaluation.
- How the evaluation will be used.
- Whether you are looking for a fully independent evaluation.
- Your expectations in terms of reporting.

Whether you go through a formal tendering process, or come to an informal arrangement, you should expect some form of written proposal outlining

- evaluation questions
- methods
- timescale
- personnel
- reporting schedule
- costs

All of the above may be subject to negotiation, before final agreement is reached and work commences.



5. Questions to ask potential evaluators

Presentations or interviews sometimes form part of a tendering process for independent evaluation. Following the submission of a proposal, short-listed organisations are invited to present their proposals and answer questions. Elaborate selection procedures such as these are probably only justified for large-scale projects and when large sums of money are involved.

However, this is not to deter you from having more informal discussions with potential evaluators. You need to ensure that you are getting what you want from the process. Use the toolkit to give you inspiration and to suggest issues that may have been overlooked in proposals. Don't be afraid to make suggestions, ask for clarification or challenge the methods proposed by the evaluator.

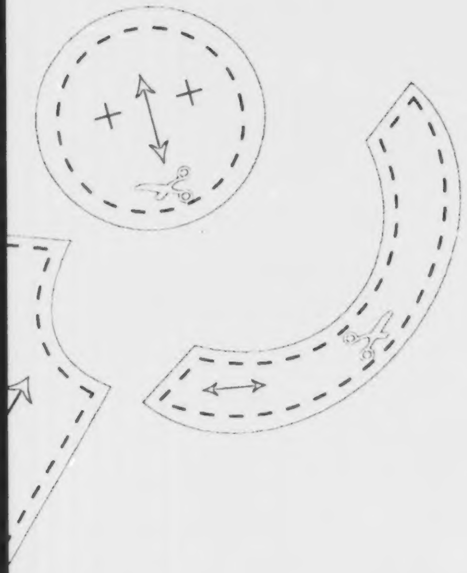
And don't be bamboozled by technical language. If you still can't decipher the proposal after consulting the Toolkit glossary, ask for some plain English translation. It's worth asking yourself whether the person who wrote this incomprehensible proposal will be able to deliver a comprehensible and useful evaluation report …

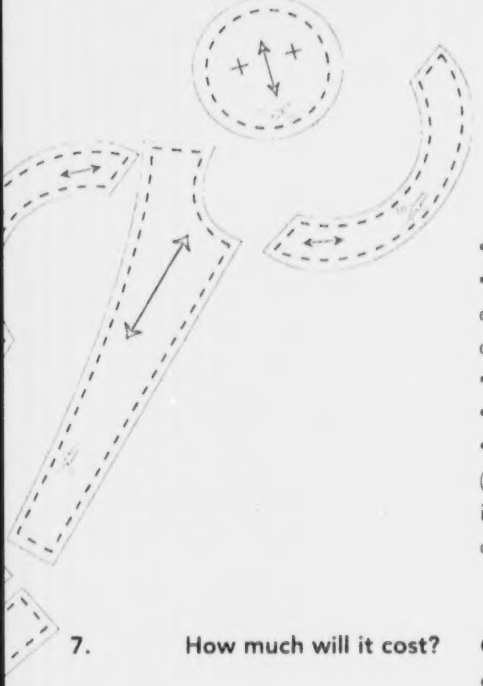
6. Skills and suitability

Bear in mind that while independent evaluators may be experts in research methodology, they may not be experts in parenting, or in the particular model of working employed in your project. Project managers and staff will therefore have an important role to play in ensuring that the particular context and background is sufficiently understood by the evaluator through discussion, providing documents, allowing observation etc.

Be aware also that some researchers may have particular qualitative or quantitative skills or interests and be reluctant or unable to use other methods. A good evaluation should be designed with the needs of the project in mind, not constructed according to the skills or preferences of the evaluator.

Think about the personal qualities of the individuals – remember these are people you will be working alongside for weeks, months, or even years. Find out exactly who will be doing the work. This may not be the person who is 'fronting' it at the negotiating stage; it is unlikely that the professor you discuss methods and budgets with will be the person actually knocking on doors asking to interview parents.





- Do you have confidence that they will be able to deliver what you want?
- Do they exhibit a genuine interest in the project, or do you suspect that the evaluation means little more to them than a bit of extra cash for their department?
- Do you understand each other, do you 'speak the same language'?
- Do they seem sensitive to the needs of the project and your clients?
- How do you think they will relate to the parents and children you work with?

(Ultimately, you will have to trust your gut feelings on this one – don't feel intimidated by paper credentials. If you feel they will lack credibility with your client group, then the quality of data they collect may be questionable.)

7. How much will it cost?

Obviously this will vary enormously according to the scale of the work and the charging policy of the organisations involved. As a rough rule of thumb, you could expect a fairly basic independent evaluation to cost in the region of 10 per cent of a project's budget.

Most researchers cost their proposals according to a calculation of daily rates. Sometimes this figure will include institutional overheads (such as the costs of office accommodation), in other formats these costs will appear separately. More inexperienced staff will be cheaper; universities will often use graduate students to collect data. On top of the staffing costs will be added costs for questionnaires, travel, postage, printing reports and so on.

8. Putting it in writing

Agreements made with external evaluators should always be put in writing. Usually the evaluation proposal will be the central document, but you should ensure that you also have a detailed statement of costs and payment schedules, reporting dates and mutual expectations.

9. Be prepared

It may be no fault of yours or the individual commissioned to undertake the evaluation but things can go wrong. Make provision in your planning and above all in your contract if, for example, deadlines are not able to be met. Have a path set to get you both past the problem.

10. Further advice and information

In 1994 the Social Research Association (SRA) produced a good practice guide to commissioning social research (currently being updated). This is available for downloading from the SRA's website: www.the-sra.org.uk

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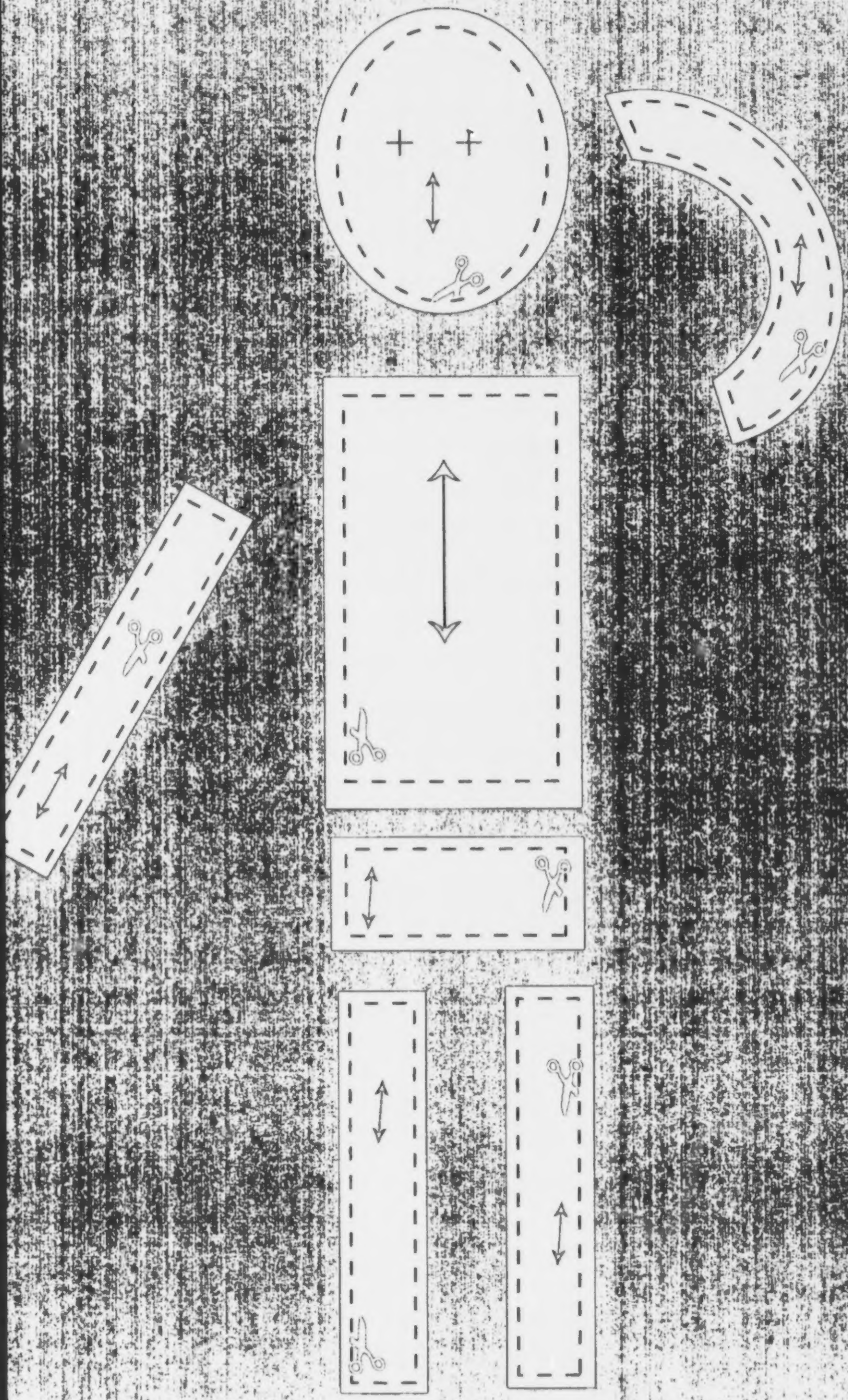
glossary of commonly used evaluation and research terms



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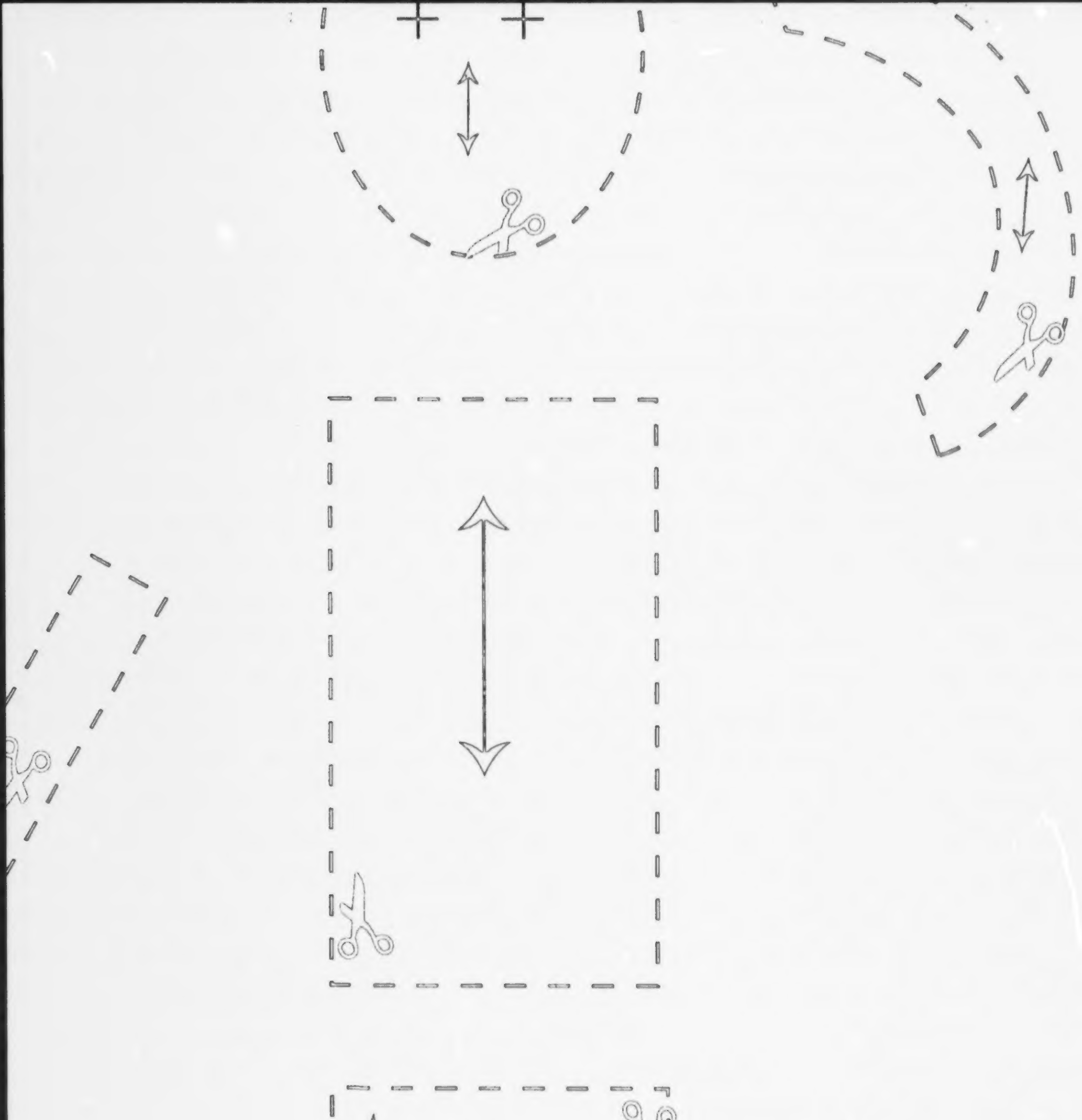

Term	Explanation
Action research	The term 'action research' is used to refer to a range of different research styles and activities. The common ground is that the research (including, sometimes, evaluation) is conducted from the inside, either by practitioners, clients or researchers based within the organisational setting, and forms part of an ongoing developmental process. The new knowledge arising from the research initiates or is a catalyst for change. In evaluation terms, action research tends therefore to be a formative exercise, feeding back findings into the project or programme, enabling changes and improvements to be made.
Aggregate	In quantitative analysis, aggregate means bringing together the data from a number of sources. These sources could be individual respondents, or perhaps responses from a number of parenting groups. If data is to be aggregated it is essential that like is added to like (ie identical questions must have been asked in each case).
Aims	The overall aim or aims of a project or programme refer to what it is trying to achieve, what difference it hopes to make. Aims are generally broken down into operational objectives. Agreeing clear and 'SMART' aims and objectives for a project is a preliminary stage that needs to be completed before an evaluation plan can be drawn up. One focus of evaluation may be to establish the extent to which the project has been successful in achieving its aims and objectives. ***See also objectives.***
Analysis	Analysis is the process of making sense of all the data collected. It involves systematic and rigorous procedures, including summarising and examining relationships in the data. This is the case for both qualitative and quantitative data.
Anecdotal evidence	Informal and unsystematically collected information, such as personal reports of experiences. Evaluation is often commissioned as a way of 'going beyond' anecdotal evidence, perhaps in order to confirm, refute or explore further some ideas raised. Anecdote can thus be a useful starting point in generating research or evaluation questions.
Anonymity	Ensuring that research participants cannot be identified, not even to the researchers (for example, by the use of one-off self-completion questionnaires). This may not always be necessary or, indeed, possible – some individuals may be identifiable by their position in an organisation, or by particular unique combinations of circumstances. ***See also confidentiality.***

Term	Explanation
Attribution	Being able to say that any changes occurring in programme participants were due to the programme itself. This is a problem for many small-scale evaluations; a positive effect or change may have been detected (for example using a before-after study), but this cannot be attributed with any degree of certainty to the programme. Other events (for example a television series about parenting) might have caused the change, or the parents might have changed anyway. One way of addressing this problem (though not without problems of its own) is through the use of control or comparison groups. Data triangulation can also help to support a case for the programme's efficacy. ***See also causation.***
Attrition	In longitudinal research and evaluation designs, there will almost inevitably be a loss of participants over time. For example they may move without leaving contact details, not wish to participate in the study any more, or die. This is known as sample attrition and can introduce bias if there are systematic differences between those who leave the study and those who continue.
Baseline data	Information collected at the start of a programme, to form a basis for comparison and measurement of change. At an individual level, such information may perform a dual role, being also used within the context of a needs assessment carried out by project workers. ***See also before-after study.***
Before-after study	Also sometimes known as a pre-test, post-test study. In order to find out if a programme has had any impact on parents or children, it will be necessary to include some element of before and after measurement in your evaluation design. This enables change to be measured, although, on its own, we cannot be certain that any change observed will be due to the programme itself (see attribution). When to take the 'after' measurement is another issue – this may be immediately the programme ends or several weeks or months later (or both). Sometimes it may be possible to identify a control or comparison group to test at the same time. ***See also baseline data.***
Benchmarking	A technique developed in the business sector, but now applied more widely, benchmarking refers to comparing the performances of similar or otherwise comparable organisations or services.

Term	Explanation
Bias	Bias refers to anything in the evaluation design or its execution that has the effect of distorting the findings in a particular direction. For example, if parents who complete the programme are included in a survey, but those who drop out are not, then the results are likely to be biased in favour of the programme. Bias can also result from leading questions in a questionnaire, or the particular prejudices or interests of an interviewer.
Case study	A study of one particular individual, group or organisation. Typically it will include data collected from a number of sources ***(see triangulation)***, and will include a detailed description and analysis of the particular case in question. Often used for illustrative purposes.
Causation	The relationship of cause and effect. An evaluation may be designed to demonstrate that an observed or measured change in behaviour is actually caused by (or can be attributed to) a particular intervention. Such a design would need to involve a control group. ***See also correlation and attribution.***
Closed questions	Questions to which there are usually just one or two possible answers (for example, 'yes' or 'no'), or where responses are restricted to a predetermined list of alternatives (as in a structured questionnaire). ***See also open questions.***
Coding	The process of organising and recording data into specific categories for analysis. For example, responses to open questions in questionnaires can be sorted into a smaller number of categories; in structured observation studies a coding system will need to be developed in order to record different types of event; qualitative analysis involves the coding of interview and other data according to pre-determined or emergent themes and concepts.
Comparison (group)	In conducting before-after studies, it is useful if some kind of comparison group can be identified (in the absence of a control group). This is a group as similar as possible to the group receiving the intervention, but who do not participate. Sometimes parents on a waiting list can be used, or those who are eligible for the programme but unable to attend. It is important to be aware of ways in which the comparison group may be different from the group on the programme, as this can be a source of bias. ***See also control group.***

Term	Explanation
Confidentiality	Researchers may guarantee confidentiality to participants. This means that information passed on during the course of the research (eg in interviews or via questionnaires) will not be divulged or reported in a way that will allow individuals (or organisations) to be identified. ***See also anonymity.***
Control (group)	Control groups are widely used in experimental and medical research. In social research, a control group is a group of people as similar as possible (in relevant respects) to the group of people receiving the intervention, but who do not themselves receive it. The two groups are tested at the same times, and the results compared. In a randomised controlled trial, the two groups are randomly allocated, in order to ensure that there are no systematic differences between groups. There are a number of ethical and practical difficulties associated with such methods. ***See also comparison group.***
Correlation	In quantitative analysis, if two variables are observed to vary together, they are said to be correlated. For example, if statistical analysis showed that older people in a sample had larger families, it would be said that age was positively correlated with number of children. Correlation, however, does not imply causation.
Cost-benefit analysis	This is a specialised type of evaluation, whereby all the costs and benefits associated with participation in a particular programme are estimated – in monetary terms – and compared. Costs include all the inputs to a programme (including staffing, equipment, premises and so on) and benefits are calculated on the basis of outcomes for individuals. Particularly associated with preventative programmes, and concerned with longer-term costs and savings (such as avoiding the need for other services in the future), this is a type of evaluation suited to well-established programmes. ***See also cost-effectiveness.***
Cost-effectiveness	An assessment of cost-effectiveness may be included in an evaluation, particularly if the programme is being compared to similar sorts of provision. In this type of analysis, all the inputs to a programme will be calculated and a non-monetary value assigned to defined positive outcomes. Whilst the concept of cost-effectiveness is readily understood, the analysis itself can be far from straightforward. The calculation of costs can be controversial (whether to include development costs, for instance), and defining positive outcomes can be even more difficult (parents completing a course, regardless of satisfaction? children removed from the child protection register?). ***See also cost-benefit analysis.***

Term	Explanation
Data	All the information collected and used in the evaluation. It need not necessarily be numerical or quantitative, although this is what most readily springs to many people's minds. Qualitative data might consist of interview transcripts, minutes of meetings or project publicity leaflets.
Data collection	The procedures involved in collecting data for the evaluation. These may include interviewing, observation, transferring information from records. May also be referred to as fieldwork by external researchers (in this case the project constitutes the 'field' of study).
Demographic data	Important background information about people routinely collected in most surveys, including such variables such as age, sex, marital status, ethnic origin, and employment status.
Depth interview (or in-depth interview)	One method of collecting qualitative data. Depth interviews are one-to-one interviews loosely steered by a topic guide in which the interviewee's experiences, attitudes, feelings or understanding are explored in detail. Often such interviews will be tape-recorded and transcribed prior to analysis.
Effectiveness	This is what all programmes are striving for, and what many evaluations are expected to assess. However, in order to be meaningful, and subject to evaluation, it is important that effectiveness in any given context is clearly defined. This requires a return to aims and objectives. If you want to know you are 'making a difference', you need to start out by considering what sort of a difference, how much difference, to whom the difference should be made, and by when any difference should be observable. This will greatly assist in any attempt to assess effectiveness.
Evaluation	Evaluation consists of a set of systematic, planned activities designed to assess the worth or effectiveness of a service or programme (Toolkit working definition). Evaluation can take many different forms, but most evaluations are likely to include: • A planned programme of data collection (not adhoc or relying on anecdotal evidence) • A process element, underpinned by systematic monitoring • Probably some direct data collection from stakeholders. • Both qualitative and quantitative data.

Term	Explanation
Evidence	Data that has been systematically collected and analysed during the course of an evaluation constitutes evidence. This is in contrast to anecdotal evidence, which is come upon selectively or accidentally. More broadly, rigorously-conducted research and evaluation studies provide evidence of the effectiveness of different sorts of interventions and programmes.
Evidence-based, or evidence-informed practice (or services)	Evidence-based practice refers to the development and provision of social, health and educational services according to established need and known effectiveness of certain types of intervention and any other available relevant evidence. The evidence in question will be largely derived from existing research and evaluation studies. In order to continue the cycle, new services and programmes should also be evaluated, and the findings added to the evidence-bank.
External evaluation	Evaluation conducted by people unconnected with the project, usually professional researchers, evaluators or academics. ***See also independent evaluation.***
Fieldwork	For external evaluators, fieldwork consists of data collection activities that take place in the 'field' of study (as opposed to in a library or behind a desk). Fieldwork in the evaluation of a parenting project might involve observation within a family centre or interviewing parents in their homes.
Filter	A question, usually in a structured interview or questionnaire, the response to which directs certain respondents to a related further question or questions. For example those responding 'yes' to the filter question 'Do you have any pre-school children?' might then be asked a series of questions about local provision for the under-5s. Those who responded 'no' would skip these questions and be directed to a later section of the questionnaire.
Focus group	Sometimes referred to as group discussions, a focus group is typically an unstructured group interview, led by a skilled facilitator. Focus groups are designed to elicit ideas, explore perceptions and develop concepts. Optimum group size is around 6-8 members. Focus group participants will be purposively sampled in order to ensure an appropriate degree of homogeneity. In qualitative research, focus group interviews are usually tape-recorded and transcribed.

Term	Explanation
Formative (evaluation)	Formative evaluation focuses on processes, and can assist in the development and improvement of programmes or services. It is likely that regular feedback to project staff and managers will be built into a formative evaluation plan, enabling changes and adjustments to be made to service delivery. Such evaluation is of particular benefit to new or innovative projects, although if changes are continually being made as a result of the evaluation, firm conclusions will not be able to be drawn about effectiveness.
Generalisability	The extent to which research or evaluation findings can be expected to hold true for a wider population (for quantitative studies), or in other settings (for qualitative studies).
Group discussion (or interview)	***See focus group.***
Impact	The effects (direct and indirect) of an intervention or service (or a particular part or element of that service). An impact evaluation may focus specifically on the targeted population (eg parents) or take a broader view, considering also the impact of the project on children, or on other services in the area.
In-depth interview	***See depth interview.***
Independent (evaluation)	Evaluation conducted by people with no vested interest in the project, programme or service. This type of evaluation can be expected to give a more objective view, although it must be borne in mind that evaluators, although independent of the project in question, may nevertheless have an allegiance to a particular theoretical standpoint. ***See also external evaluation.***
Indicators	Many readers will be familiar with the jargon of 'performance indicators'. The meaning in research is very similar. Indicators are the signs that tell us that something has been achieved, or some change has occurred. Utilised in outcome evaluations, indicators need to be tangible and measurable (which means that they may be rather crude).
Informed consent	The process of obtaining voluntary participation of individuals in research or evaluation based on a full understanding of the possible benefits and risks. Consent must be in writing to be legally valid.

Term	Explanation
Inputs	Project inputs are defined as resources provided in order that the project can happen (staffing, premises, equipment and so on).
Internal evaluation	***See self-evaluation.***
Intervention	The term intervention is often used to describe a specific programme or 'treatment', particularly in relation to preventative work with individuals or families.
Interview	A conversation or discussion with the purpose of eliciting specific information from the interviewee. Research and evaluation interviews vary in the degree to which they are structured, but in all cases some form of interview schedule or topic guide will be used by the interviewer.
Interview schedule	A list of questions used in face-to-face interviewing. This may also be referred to as a questionnaire. An interview schedule may be highly structured, with set wording to the questions, specified prompts and pre-coded responses. Alternatively, it may be a simple list of areas and themes to be explored and used as an 'aide memoire' in a depth interview. ***See also questionnaire and topic guide.***
Longitudinal study	A research or evaluation design which returns to the same sample several times over a period of weeks, months or years in order to track changes and developments.
Measure, measurement	Measurement is at the heart of quantitative evaluation methods. In order to assess changes associated with a programme or service, measurements need to be taken (at the very least) before and after involvement. It is therefore important to establish what changes are anticipated in advance. Various standardised tests of 'measures' exist which measure specific attributes, for example self-esteem, depression, and parenting stress.
Monitoring	Monitoring is about keeping a regular check on project activities by systematically collecting and recording relevant information.

Term	Explanation
Needs assessment	At an individual level, project workers may conduct a needs assessment on parents referred to a project. This will inform the most suitable type of programme or intervention for that individual. (Data gathered for this purpose may also be aggregated and used in the evaluation of the project as a whole, as baseline data). Another use of the term needs assessment is when the needs of a local population may be assessed in order to inform the development and provision of appropriate services. There are various types of need ranging from expressed need to unidentified need.
Non-respondent	Someone who does not respond to a survey, either by failing to return a self-completion questionnaire, or by being repeatedly unavailable for interview. ***See response rate for some implications of non-response.***
Objectives	Practical steps that a project states will be undertaken in order to achieve its aims. Objectives will usually refer to activities and services, and should ideally be 'SMART". ***See also aims.***
Observation	In order to collect detailed data relating to parent-child interactions, or pupil behaviour in a classroom, it may be necessary to carry out some observation. This may take the form of structured or unstructured observation. Structured observation consists of recording instances of particular pre-determined events or behaviours during a specified period of time. Unstructured observation is used to record and describe events or behaviours as they occur, without any pre-conceived ideas of what might be seen.
Open questions	Questions phrased so as to allow the respondent to answer entirely in their own way, using their own words. Such questioning is used to gather qualitative data and may be used in face-to-face interviews, or in self-completion questionnaires. ***See also depth interviews, focus groups, closed questions.***
Outcome (evaluation)	This is an assessment of what effect the project or service has actually had, what changes it has brought about for its intended target group. There are a number of potential difficulties associated with outcome evaluation, including those of attribution, statistical significance, and measurement. 'Intended outcomes' are those predicted by the project, and implicit in its aims. However, an evaluation may also point to some outcomes that were unintended or unanticipated (these could be either positive or negative). Unintended outcomes may be suggested by theoretical considerations, or may be flagged up by a process evaluation.

Term	Explanation
Outputs	Outputs refer to what is actually produced by a project or service. For example, the provision of a certain number of training courses, interventions, workshops or physical objects such as training videos or publicity leaflets.
Participative evaluation (or research)	Participative approaches to evaluation seek to involve service users in the evaluative process itself. Varying degrees of participation are possible, including involvement in framing evaluation questions, designing questionnaires, carrying out analysis and reporting findings. In a parenting context, a participative approach could involve children as well as parents in the evaluation. Participative evaluation can be facilitated by external evaluators, or carried out in-house.
Pilot study	To test out an aspect of the evaluation in advance. For example, trying a questionnaire on a small number of respondents first. This can be a useful exercise for throwing up a range of problems, such as the questionnaire taking too long to fill in, or a particular question being universally misunderstood. Larger studies may involve weeks or months of preparatory pilot work.
Population	In research terms, 'population' refers to all possible members of the group being studied. For example, in evaluating the effectiveness of a parent education class, the population may be all parents (or families) attending classes during that term. An evaluation with a broader remit might consider the population to include all parents referred to the project (whether or not they attended classes), or the parents in a particular area served by a drop-in centre. It is important to be clear about what the population is when deciding on a sampling strategy. ***See sample.***
Pre-coded questions	A type of closed question, pre-coded questions are typically found in structured questionnaires or interview schedules. They are questions to which a range of possible responses have been determined in advance. The interviewee or respondent has to select the one that applies to them. The advantage of having pre-coded questions is felt at the analysis stage – it is easy to deal with large quantities of data in this form.

Term	Explanation
Pre-test post-test design	***See before-after study.***
Process evaluation	A process evaluation focuses on the actual content and delivery of a service or programme, as opposed to its effects on participants. It will typically involve the collection of monitoring data, a detailed description of the programme itself, and the views of stakeholders. Process evaluation can be particularly useful for new or developing services and to provide context for the findings of an outcome evaluation. Process information is essential if effective programmes are to be successfully replicated. ***See replicability.***
Programme	In evaluation literature from the US, a 'program' generally equates to what in the UK would be described as a service, project or intervention.
Purposive sampling	As opposed to random sampling (in which the researcher is effectively uninvolved with the selection of subjects) purposive sampling involves making deliberate choices. Purposive sampling is used in qualitative research in order to ensure that specific groups and viewpoints are included in the study.
Programme integrity	This is the extent to which a programme was delivered as specified, and is of particular relevance to manualised programmes (eg those with a cognitive-behavioural approach consisting of a detailed programme of specified exercises and activities). Evaluation of such programmes may include an assessment of programme integrity.
Qualitative (research, methods, data, analysis)	Qualitative research is principally concerned with exploring, understanding and illuminating complex social phenomena. The qualitative researcher aims to avoid imposing pre-conceived ideas on the process, allowing people to respond and describe their experience in their own terms. The data collected can come in many forms (including interview transcripts, written responses to open-ended questions, other documents including drawings, researcher's field-notes). Qualitative analysis is non-numerical, and aims to identify and illuminate themes and concepts arising from within the data itself. Qualitative approaches can be used in a complementary way to quantitative methods in an evaluation study, for example to determine the pre-coded responses for a structured survey, or to offer explanations of unexpected quantitative findings, or to help explain and describe more complex processes.

Term	Explanation
Quantitative (research, methods, data, analysis)	Quantitative research involves statistics. In order to be able to collate and process quantitative data, it is vital that it is collected using structured (and comparable) questionnaires and instruments. This is as important for routine project monitoring systems as it is for specially designed research or evaluation tools. Spreadsheets and sophisticated computer software may be required to carry out the more advanced types of quantitative analysis, but some simple statistics can be generated using straightforward techniques (counting, using tally charts, calculating averages and percentages, for example). A major aim of quantitative approaches is to generate findings that can be generalised to the population in question, and sampling is an important design issue. It is difficult to achieve statistical significance with small sample sizes.
Quasi-experiment	A research design which includes a comparison or control group selected on a non-random basis.
Questionnaire	A set of questions designed to collect data from respondents. Each respondent will be asked the same questions, in the same order, so that responses can be collated and compared. Questionnaires can be administered by an interviewer (in which case the term interview schedule may be used), or filled in by the respondent themselves (self-completion questionnaire). Depending on the degree of standardisation required, questionnaires may be either structured or semi-structured.
Random sample	A sample taken from a defined population in which any member of that population has an equal chance of being selected. ***See sampling frame.***
Randomised controlled trial (RCT)	Often regarded as the 'gold standard' evaluation design, the RCT is commonly employed in medical research, but is less easily applied to social welfare programmes. In its simplest form, subjects are randomly allocated to two groups, one 'treatment' and one control group. The control group receives either no intervention, or another type of intervention. Data is collected from the two groups and compared. Any differences in outcome between the two groups can be attributed to the intervention itself, as any differences between the groups can be assumed to be random rather than systematic.

Term	Explanation
Reflexivity	Reflexivity refers to a process of continual reflection, in particular on the effect that the researcher themselves may have on the research (or evaluation) process and the quality of data collected. An important aspect of qualitative research, reflexivity is also particularly pertinent to the role of the internal evaluator. A reflexive approach can help to identify potential areas of bias in the evaluation findings.
Reliability	The extent to which a test gives consistent results if applied more than once to the same people, under the same conditions. Standardised tests are generally assessed for reliability as part of the validation procedure. ***See validity.***
Replicability	An important function of any process evaluation is to describe a service or intervention in sufficient detail that it can be repeated elsewhere. It is all very well discovering that a particular approach to parenting appears to be effective, but of no practical use if the evaluation fails to describe how it has been implemented and in what circumstances. For similar reasons, it is important that research and evaluation reports include a clear record of the methods, sample and questionnaires used, in order that others may replicate the study.
Representative (sample)	A sample drawn from a population that accurately reflects relevant features of that population, enabling research findings to be generalised to the population. One method of achieving this is by random sampling. Another is to use a quota system, to ensure that certain features of the population of importance to the study are accurately reflected in the sample.
Respondent	One who responds to a survey (ie completes a questionnaire or answers questions put by an interviewer).
Response rate	It is exceedingly rare for every questionnaire to be returned in a survey, or for every planned interview to actually take place. The proportion of responses actually achieved is calculated as a percentage and referred to as the response rate. It is always worth thinking in any survey about whether (and in what way) non-respondents may be different from respondents, as this can be a source of bias.

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Term	Explanation
Rigorous	Sponsors often demand that an evaluation be conducted rigorously, and that findings should be robust. This expresses a desire that the evaluation must be designed in such a way as to limit – as far as possible – alternative explanations for the results. Methods and findings should be able to withstand scrutiny, and should be generalisable. Such demands are usually attached to outcome rather than process evaluations, and are often associated with a preference for quantitative rather than qualitative methods.
Robust	***See rigorous.***
Sample	The group of people selected for study from the population of interest. For quantitative studies it is important to ensure that the sample is as representative of this wider population as possible, in order that findings can be generalised. This may involve an element of random selection. For qualitative studies, the sampling procedure is quite different. In order, for example, to ascertain the views of specific minority ethnic groups, it will be necessary to purposively sample. ***See also random sample, representative sample, purposive sampling.***
Sampling frame	A list of the entire population eligible to be included in the study. A sampling frame is necessary in order to generate a random sample.
Self-completion (questionnaire)	A questionnaire that the respondent fills in themselves, usually on paper, although sometimes using specially designed computer software. This may be part of a postal survey.
Self-evaluation	This refers to evaluation conducted by project staff and/or users. While this will be cheaper, and evaluators will have first-hand knowledge of the service, such an exercise will not be independent, and evaluators may lack the time and skills required for a thorough and rigorous study.
Semi-structured (questionnaire or interview)	Unlike a structured questionnaire, a semi-structured questionnaire allows for some flexibility in responses. The same questions will be asked to each respondent, but pre-coded lists of responses will not be provided. The respondent may write in his/her own answers; alternatively, in a face-to-face interview, the interviewer may make notes, or tape-record responses. Responses can then either be coded and subjected to quantitative analysis, or retained as qualitative data, depending on the requirements of the study.

Term	Explanation
SMART	SMART objectives (or evaluation questions) are • Specific • Measurable • Achievable • Realistic • Time-based
Stakeholder	Considered to be anyone with an 'interest' in the conduct and findings of the evaluation study. A list of stakeholders may therefore include managers, staff, parents, children, other family members, external evaluators, other local parents, funders, policy-makers and trustees.
Standardised (test)	Standardised tests have been designed to measure certain specific attributes (such as depression or self-esteem). They will have been validated ***(see validity)***, and must be administered exactly as directed, in order not to compromise this validity. Usually there is a scoring system, by which individuals can be measured against population norms. While some standardised tests are freely available, others must be paid for.
Statistical significance	Without getting into technical detail, statistical significance means being able to state with confidence that particular research findings (for example differences between before and after scores on a specific test) are unlikely to have occurred by chance. The usual standard adopted by researchers is odds of 20:1 against a chance occurrence. Generally speaking, the larger the sample size, the greater likelihood of achieving statistically significant findings. Be warned, however, that statistical significance does not imply that findings are practically significant – for example, a (statistically) significant improvement of just one per cent on a certain measure may not impress much if used as evidence of programme effectiveness.
Structured (questionnaire or interview)	As its name implies a structured questionnaire is one where question order and wording are pre-determined. This can be administered face-to-face (see interview schedule) or may be designed for self-completion. Structured questionnaires are usually paper-based, but some of the larger research organisations now also use computer technology for survey interviewing. Usually a set of pre-coded responses will be provided, yielding data suitable for quantitative analysis.

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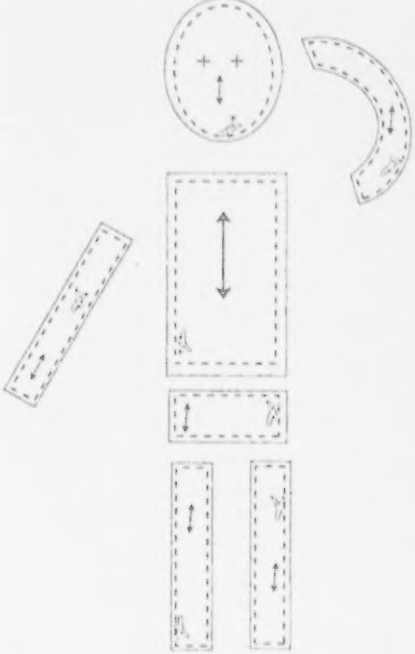
Term	Explanation
Summative (evaluation)	A summative evaluation focuses principally on outcomes, rather than (or in addition to) process. It is a response to evaluation questions relating to the impact or effects of a programme or service. In contrast to formative evaluation, it will not be expected to draw conclusions until the end of the evaluation period (which will be clearly defined at the outset). This type of evaluation is more suited to established programmes that have overcome any teething troubles, and want to demonstrate their effectiveness.
Survey	Conducting a survey involves the use of a structured questionnaire (either self-completion or administered by interviewers) on a large sample of people. A survey generates quantitative data.
Targets	A term associated with service planning and monitoring, targets are associated with a project's activities or objectives. They should be very specific, for example, detailing numbers of clients to be reached, or dates by which events should occur.
Theory	Most parenting programmes will be underpinned by a theory (even if this is not explicitly stated) explaining how, why and in what circumstances the programme should be effective. It is one of the jobs of research and evaluation to develop and test theories.
Topic guide	Used by an interviewer in depth interviews as an aide memoire of subjects and themes to be addressed. Whilst the wording of questions in such interviews is not predetermined, and interviewees are encouraged to describe their own experiences in detail, there will nevertheless be a number of specific areas that the interviewer wishes to cover with all subjects. ***See also interview schedule.***
Triangulation	Using different research methods or sources of data to look at the same issue. For example, in examining the effectiveness of parent education classes, an evaluator might conduct interviews with the facilitator and with parents, as well as observing sessions, or administering standardised tests. If all the data points to the same conclusion, all well and good. Where there are disparities, further investigation or interpretation is indicated.
Unstructured interview	***See depth interview.***

Term	Explanation
Validity	In research terms 'validity' has a number of specific usages and applications, all related in one way or another to the truth and accuracy of data and results. Broadly speaking, the validity of research findings relates to the extent to which such findings have eliminated alternative explanations and can be generalised more widely. More specifically, the validity of a test or questionnaire relates to the extent to which it actually measures what it is intended to measure. The advantage of using standardised tests, in research or evaluation is that these instruments have been through an extensive and rigorous validating process. However it is important to note that validity can be specific – a test validated for teenagers cannot be assumed to be valid for younger children. Some tests may also have culture-specific validity (for example, if they were validated on white Americans, they may not be suitable for ethnically mixed British samples). ***See also reliability.***
Variable	In quantitative research, a variable is any unit of analysis that can take a number of values. It is something expected to vary throughout the population under study. A simple example of a variable is gender (the values being 'male' and 'female'), another is number of children (the values being whole numbers from zero upwards).



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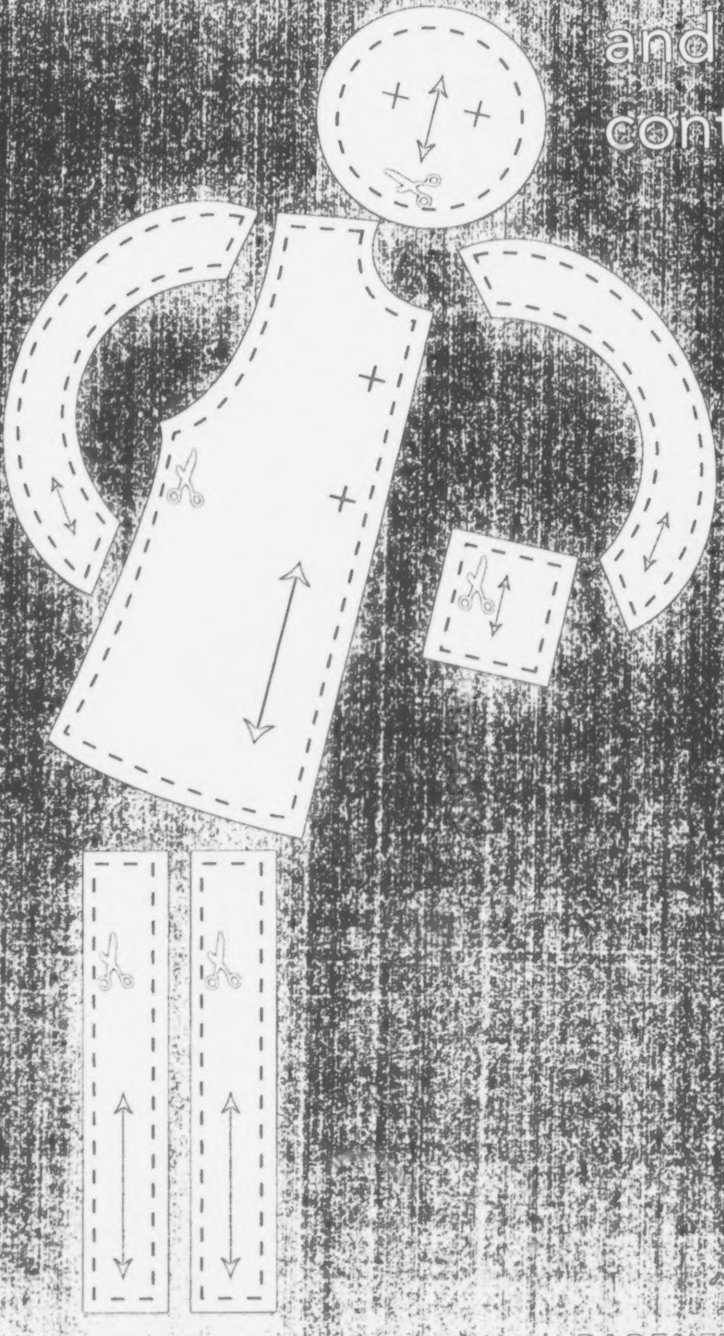
reading, resources and contacts



PARENTING EDUCATION & SUPPORT FORUM

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Publications

1. **Evaluation (general)**

BBC Children in Need (1999) ***A guide to self-evaluation***
London: BBC
Written primarily for voluntary organisations in receipt of Children in Need grants, this 41 page booklet is a non-threatening and basic step-by-step introduction to conducting a simple self-evaluation exercise. It would be particularly suitable for small projects with few resources and little prior experience of monitoring or evaluation.

Ball, Mog (1988) ***Evaluation in the voluntary sector.***
London: The Forbes Trust
Although written more than a decade ago, this publication contains invaluable guidance and advice for any voluntary agency with an interest in evaluation. It contains a useful 'guidelines' section containing questions and checklists to assist in planning an evaluation, and more than 20 pages of case studies and examples.

Charities Evaluation Services ***Evaluation Discussion Papers***
London: CES

1. ***The purpose of evaluation***
2. ***Different ways of seeing evaluation***
3. ***Self-evaluation***
4. ***Involving users in evaluation***
5. ***Performance indicators: use and misuse***
6. ***Using evaluation to explore policy***
7. ***Outcome monitoring***

The papers are specifically geared towards the needs and perspective of voluntary sector organisations, and can be purchased separately or as a set. 8 pages each.

Health Development Agency (2000) ***National Healthy School Standard: Monitoring and Evaluation***
London: HDA
Although written with school-based health projects in mind, this booklet nevertheless contains practical guidance useful in a range of other contexts. It explains in clear language and with examples the importance of evaluation and monitoring, and how to build them into the planning cycle of a project.

Robson, Colin (2000) ***Small Scale Evaluation***
London: Sage
A comprehensive and readable publication for anyone involved in the evaluation of local services focusing on people. No specialist knowledge or prior experience of evaluation or research is assumed. Having a list of practical tasks at the end of each chapter, this book is particularly helpful as a practical guide to support you through the process of planning and carrying out an evaluation. 154 pages.

Rossi, PH, Freeman, HE & Lipsey MW, (1999) ***Evaluation: a systematic approach (6th edition)***
Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc
This is a large and influential tome, now in its sixth edition. Serious and thorough but not too heavy-going, it includes sections on randomised designs and quasi experimental designs. Probably of limited relevance to small projects with low evaluation budgets. 500 pages.

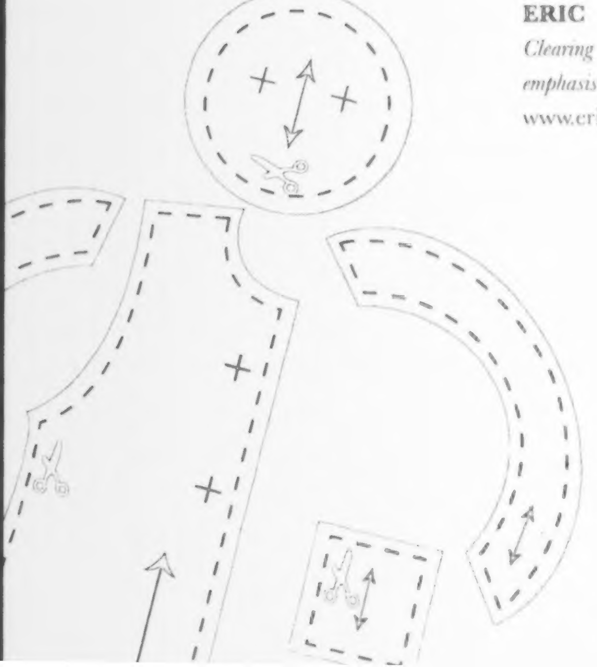
Thomas, Alain (2000) ***Valuing evaluation: a practical approach to designing an evaluation that works for you.***
The Hague: Bernard Van Leer Foundation
A short report of a workshop held in Tel Aviv in 1997 aimed at helping early childhood projects evaluate their own work. While some of the terminology is used in unorthodox ways, the report nevertheless benefits from examples provided by real projects and has useful sections on generating questions and answers.

Wadsworth, Yoland (1997) ***Everyday evaluation on the run***
Australia: Allen & Unwin
A lively, accessible and practical Australian publication (available in the UK through London office of Allen & Unwin) aimed at empowering insiders to evaluate their own work, and to develop a culture of evaluation within organisations. Contains plenty of practical advice and illustrative examples. 115 pages.

Websites

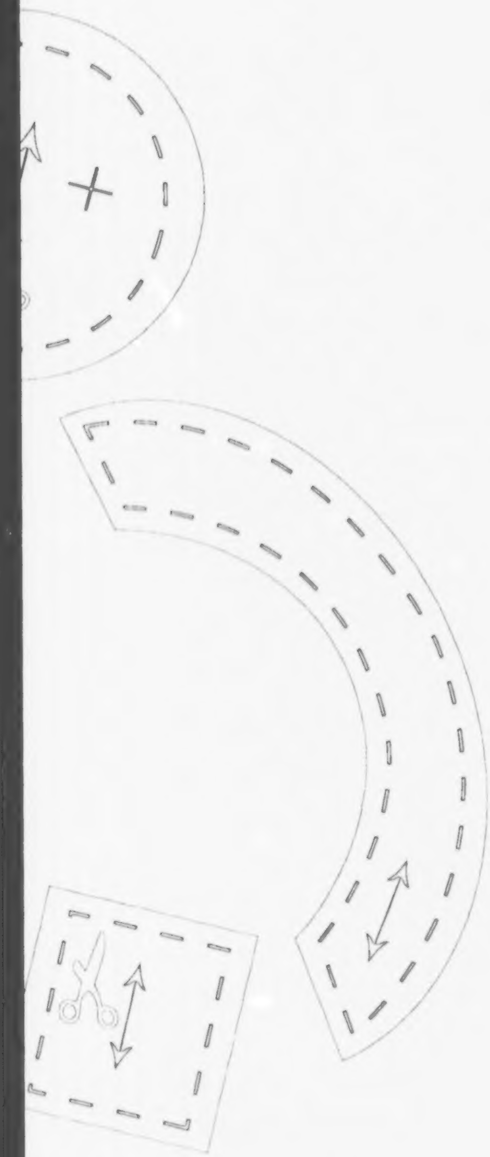
American Evaluation Association
Very large evaluation site. Includes a wide range of Topical Interest Groups relating to specific aspects or applications of evaluation.
www.eval.org

ERIC
Clearing house for assessment, evaluation, and research information. American site with a strong emphasis on educational testing.
www.ericae.net



Publications

2. Parenting and evaluation



Utting, D (ed) (2001) ***Made to Measure? Evaluating Community Initiatives for Children*** Children in Society, vol 15, 1
Special edition of the journal Children in Society, published by the National Children's Bureau. Includes an article by the manager of a Parents Centre (Being Evaluated: A Practitioner's View).

Grimshaw, R & McGuire, C (1998) ***Evaluating Parenting Programmes: a study of stakeholders views***
London: National Children's Bureau
This study involved conducting interviews with a range of stakeholders in three 'open-access' parenting programmes. A total of eighty qualitative interviews were carried out with commissioners, facilitators, parents and children. The study includes interviews with parents who did not participate in programmes as well as those who did. 68 pages.

Grimshaw, R (1999) ***Parenting Education and Support: Guidelines on evaluation***
London: PESF
16-page pamphlet providing guidelines for parenting projects. Includes 2 pages of references.

Henricson, C. (1999) ***Assessment and Evaluation Tools for Parenting Programmes***
Brighton: Trust for the Study of Adolescence
Compiled as part of a project to support parents whose children were involved with the youth justice system. Out of print. Contact NFPI for a copy (020 7424 3460).

Reppucci, ND, Britner, PA & Woolard JL (1997) ***Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect Through Parent Education***
Baltimore, Maryland: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.
Based on research into 25 preventative parenting programs in the US, this book has a strong focus on evaluation and contains extensive information on outcome measures. 233 pages.

Smith, C. (1996) ***Developing Parenting Programmes***
London: National Children's Bureau
Drawing on a survey of 38 group-based programmes, this book includes descriptions of the services themselves, a discussion about effectiveness, and a proposed framework for evaluation as a development tool for practitioners. 184 pages.

Statham, June (2000) ***Outcomes and effectiveness of family support services: a research review***
London: Institute of Education
A short review of the research around the effectiveness of different types of family support services, including parenting education. Includes a section on tests and measures commonly used. 24 pages.

Websites

Parenting Education & Support Forum
Lists parenting programmes.
www.parenting-forum.org.uk

Sure Start
Contains information and guidance relating to the Sure Start programme, including local evaluation (via 'infobank').
www.surestart.gov.uk

National Evaluation of Sure Start (NESS)
In addition to detailed information about the national evaluation (including ethical guidance and notes on cost-effectiveness), this site is building up a bank of evaluation-related documents, queries and tools posted by local evaluators.
www.ness.bbk.ac.uk

Harvard Family Research Project
American on-line evaluation journal.
www.gseweb.harvard.edu/~hfrp/eval.html

Wisconsin Dept of Health & Family Services
Online evaluation resource guide. Lots of references and links (to US studies and publications).
www.dhfs.state.wi.us/aboutDHFS/OSF/DHFSEvaluationResourceGuide.pdf

Publications

3. Research methods (general)

Fuller, R & Petch, A (1995) ***Practitioner Research: the reflexive social worker***.
Buckingham: Open University Press
Clearly focused on the needs of practitioners, the first half of this book examines issues and practicalities in conducting small-scale practice-based research. The second half of the book consists of descriptions of five such research studies. 212 pages.

Gilbert, N (2000) ***Researching Social Life (2nd edition)***
London: Sage publications Ltd
Aimed at an undergraduate audience, this text is more challenging than other recommendations in this section. Nevertheless it is a readable and comprehensive introduction to a range of social research applications. 366 pages.

Krueger, RA (1994) ***Focus Groups: A practical guide for applied research***.
London: Sage publications Ltd
Accessible yet comprehensive guide to planning and moderating focus groups. Also advises on the principles and process of analysing and reporting findings. 254 pages.

Robson, Colin (1993) ***Real World Research: A Resource for Social Scientists and Practitioner-Researchers***. Oxford: Blackwell
A useful, user-friendly and comprehensive text for those embarking on research for the first time. Includes chapters on research design (including experiments, surveys, case studies and evaluations), data collection methods (including observation, interviews, questionnaires) data analysis (quantitative and qualitative), and using findings to make an impact. 510 pages.

Websites

Nfer-NELSON
Publishers of a number of outcome measures and tests.
www.nfer-nelson.co.uk

Sage Publications
Publishers of a wide range of books and journals on social research methodology, including evaluation.
www.sagepub.co.uk

Social Science Information Gateway (SOSIG)
SOSIG provides a source of free Internet information for students, researchers and practitioners in the social sciences. For research and evaluation resources, search in section 'social science methodology'.
www.sosig.ac.uk

4. Ethical guidelines

The following organisations have ethical guidelines for conducting research or evaluation available on their websites:

American Evaluation Association
Guiding Principles for Evaluators.
www.eval.org

The Social Research Association
New guidelines recently published (2002).
www.the-sra.org.uk

British Sociological Association
www.britsoc.org.uk

British Psychological Society
www.bps.org.uk

National Children's Bureau (NCB)
Specific guidance on ethical research involving children is contained within NCB's Guidelines for Research, available on the website.
www.ncb.org.uk

5. Useful organisations

Parenting Education & Support Forum

PESF is the national umbrella body for people who work with parents. Formed in 1995, it is a membership organisation and also has a consultancy arm that can advise on evaluation. Its aim is to promote best practice in the field by establishing Quality Standards, keeping members informed about new developments in the field, providing opportunities for members to network and informing policymakers to let them know about best practice and what is needed.

Parenting Education & Support Forum
Unit 431, Highgate Studios, 53-79 Highgate Road, London NW5 1TL
tel 020 7284 8370
www.parenting-forum.org.uk

National Children's Bureau (NCB)

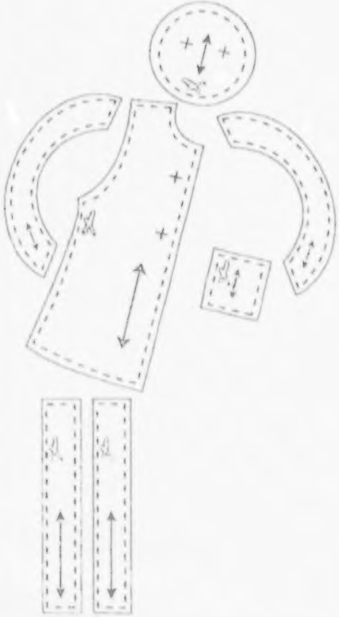
NCB is a registered charity that promotes the interests and well-being of all children and young people across every aspect of their lives. NCB's research department consists of some 15 researchers covering a range of disciplines, including a team of evaluation specialists. NCB also has a comprehensive library and information service. Membership of NCB is available to both individuals and organisations.

National Children's Bureau
8 Wakley Street, London EC1V 7QE
tel 020 7843 6000
www.ncb.org.uk

Charities Evaluation Services (CES)

CES has been existence for more than 10 years providing training, advice and information to voluntary sector projects wishing to evaluate their work or introduce quality assurance systems. CES also undertakes consultancy and external evaluation.

Charities Evaluation Services
4 Coldbath Square, London EC1R 5HL
tel 020 7713 5722
enquiries@ces-vol.org.uk



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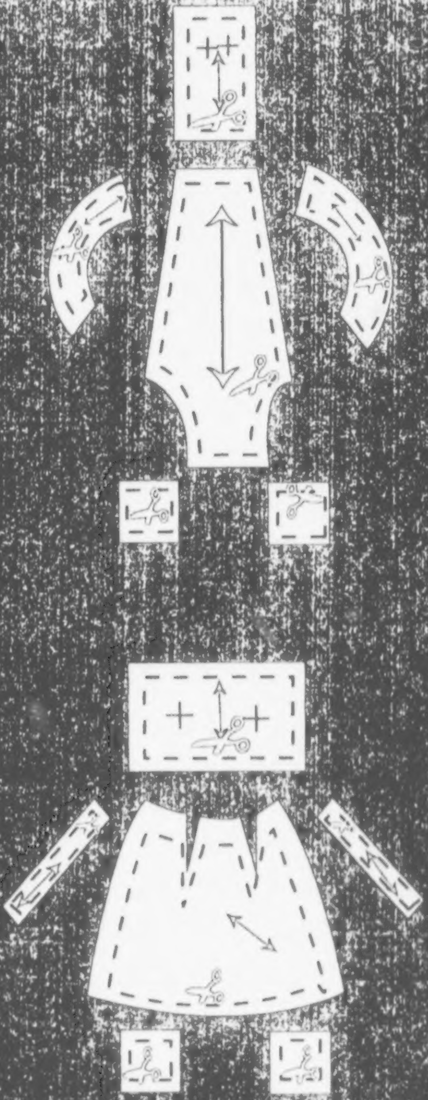
evaluation toolkit C: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

selected measures and tests



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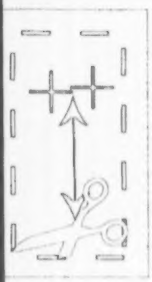
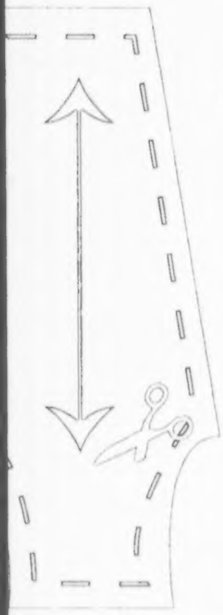
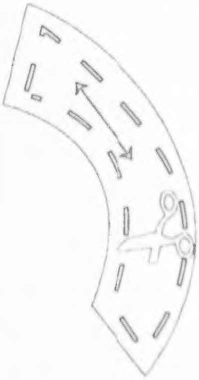


The tests and measures listed in the accompanying tables represent just some of those most commonly used in the parenting field.

The measures have been grouped into five sections as follows:

1. **Parenting**
2. **Social support**
3. **Mental health**
4. **Satisfaction with services**
5. **Child development**



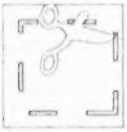


Each measure is accompanied by a brief description, and reference source.

How such measures can be used

For evaluative purposes, these tools and measures are most useful in providing evidence of change over time. Therefore they need to be administered at the start (or before) an intervention, and again at the end, and/or at a later follow up point or points. They may also be used as assessment tools by project workers before starting a programme of work with a parent, and repeated later in order to assess progress.

Many of these tests do not require special training to administer and score. In several cases therefore it will be relatively easy to assess whether change has occurred, or whether there are differences between groups (for example, between 'treatment' or comparison groups). However, it may be that such observed differences between scores have occurred by chance; that is, they may not be statistically significant. In order to demonstrate statistical significance, you may need to engage the services of a specialist researcher.



Usually such measures will have been rigorously tested for validity and reliability. They therefore need to be administered according to the instructions provided. Changing the wording or format of questions, or missing questions out altogether will severely compromise the validity and reliability of the measure.

A word of warning

It is easy to get seduced by the apparent 'objectivity' of standardised tests and feel that they are a 'must' for any evaluation. But don't be side-tracked from your own evaluation questions. Remember that outcome measures need to be appropriate to the aims and objectives of the service being evaluated. Interesting though it may be to investigate the depression levels of parents, for example, think whether this is integral to either the service in question, or to the evaluation you are planning. A standardised test will not always meet the needs of an evaluation; and it is unlikely in any case that such a measure would be used in isolation from other methods.

1. Parenting

Name	Reference	Use	Description
Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI)	Bavolek, S. (1984) Handbook for the Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI). Eau Claire, WI: Family Development Resources Inc Subject to copyright. Available from Family Development Resources Inc. www.nurturingparenting.com	To assess parenting and child-rearing attitudes that indicate high risk for child abuse and neglect	32-item self-report questionnaire
Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment (HOME Inventory)	Caldwell, B. & Bradley, M. (1984) Home observation for measurement of the environment – administration manual (revised edition) Arkansas: University of Arkansas Materials for administering and scoring the HOME inventories can be obtained via lrcoulson@ualr.edu	Observation schedule for recording aspects of the home environment and parent-child interaction. Separate versions for ages 0-3, 3-6, 6-10 and 10-15	Completed by researcher during home visit, including interview. Requires training. Takes approx 1 hour to complete
Knowledge of Child Development Inventory	Larsen, J. & Juhasz, A (1986) The Knowledge of Child Development Inventory. Adolescence, 21, 39-54 May be copied free of charge	Measures knowledge of child development from 0-3 years. Covers four areas: emotional, cognitive, physical and social development	56 multiple choice questions
Knowledge of Discipline Alternatives	Treichel One-off copyright fee. Available from www.centreforevaluationresearch.com	To measure knowledge of discipline alternatives	29 true-false questions and 1 short-answer question
Listening for Feelings of Children	Gordon, T. (1970) Parent Effectiveness Training. New York: Peter H. Wyden Corp	To examine parents' affective recognition of typical children's messages	20 short-answer questions

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Name	Reference	Use	Description
Mellow Parenting Coding System	Mills, M. & Puckering, C. (1992) The Mellow Parenting training manual. London: Dept of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Bloomfield Centre, Guy's Hospital	To analyse videotaped observations of parent-child interaction at home	Detailed coding system. Requires training to use
Parental Attitude Questionnaire	Goldberg, W. & Easterbrooks, M. (1984) Role of marital quality in toddler development. Developmental Psychology 20. 504-514	Measures parental warmth, conflict, strictness/over-protectiveness and authoritarian attitudes	71 items rated on a 6 point scale
Parental Discipline	Arnold, D., O'Leary, S., Wolff, L. & Acker, M. (1993) The parenting scale: a measure of dysfunctional parenting in discipline situations, Psychological Assessment, 5, 2, 137-144	Measures parenting style and discipline practices in parents of pre-school children	7 point scale
Parenting Daily Hassles Scale	Crnic, K.A. & Greenberg (1990) Minor Parenting Stresses with young children, Child Development, 61, 1628-1637 No copyright restriction	Assesses frequency and impact of routine stresses experienced by parents caring for young children. Period in question can be the past few days, or the last 6 months	20 'hassles' assessed on a 4 point scale. Takes 5-8 minutes to complete
Parenting Stress Index (PSI)	Abidin, R. (1995) Parenting Stress Index – Professional Manual, 3rd edition, Odesa FL: Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc Subject to copyright. May be purchased from NFER-Nelson. www.nfer-nelson.co.uk Also available from www.parinc.com	Assesses sources and levels of stress in parents, related to their parenting role. Widely used for assessment and evaluation purposes. Can be used for children up to 10, though particularly focuses on pre-school child	Self-report. Short form consists of 36 items on 5 point scale, derived from longer 101 item version. Short form takes approx 10 minutes, long form 20-30 minutes
Pleasure in Parenting	Fagot, B. (1995) Development of a pleasure in parenting scale, Early Development and Parenting, 4, 2 75-82	Likes and dislikes in parenting of toddlers	10 interactions, rated on 5 point scale

2. Social support and services

Name	Reference	Use	Description
Family Problems Questionnaire	Gibbons, J. (1990) Family support and prevention: studies in local areas. London: HMSO	Covers 'problems families often have', including social contact, parenting, health, finances and marital problems	39 items, rated by parents on scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree
Family Resources Scale	Dunst, C., Trivette, C. & Deal, A. (1988) Enabling and empowering families: principles and guidelines for practice. Cambridge, MA: Brookline Books	Assesses how far family has adequate resources (time, money, energy etc) to meet their needs	Self-completion. 21 items
Family Support Scale	Dunst, C., Trivette, C. & Deal, A. (1988) Enabling and empowering families: principles and guidelines for practice. Cambridge, MA: Brookline Books May be copied free of charge	Helpfulness of various sources of social support parents receive from family, friends and other sources	19 potential sources of support rated on 5 point scale
Maternal Social Support Index	Pascoe, J.M., Ialongo, N., Horn, W. & Reinhart, M. (1988) The Reliability and Validity of the Maternal Social Support Index, Family Medicine, 20 (4), 271-275	Assesses emotional and practical support provided by a mother's social network, including practical help, quality of relationships and community involvement	18 items. Self-completion, or as part of an interview
Social Capital Questionnaire (currently in development)	Contact: Dr Sarah Hean Florence Nightingale School of Nursing James Clerke Maxwell Building Kings College London 57 Waterloo Road London SE1 8WA 020 7848 3076 sarah.hean@kcl.ac.uk	Measures social capital as it is generated in formal networks or groups. Questionnaire in 3 parts - feelings about the group, their local area and the respondent's life	83-item (5 and 7 point scales) self completion questionnaire currently being piloted

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Name	Reference	Use	Description
Social Network Map	Tracy, E. & Whittaker, J. (1990) The Social Network Map: Assessing Social Support in Clinical Practice, Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services, October, 461-470	Assesses social support, taking into account both structure and function of an individual's social network. The map displays networks visually. The grid details supportive/non-supportive functions of relationships	Qualitative map and grid process. Administered
Social Support Questionnaire	Sarason, I.G., Levine, H.M., Basham, R.B., & Sarason, B.R. (1983) Assessing Social Support: The Social Support Questionnaire, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 44, 127-139	Measure of social support, examining both perceived amount of support and satisfaction with existing support. Can be used to detect change over time, or following intervention	Self-report. 27 items. Shorter forms also available consisting of 3, 6 and 12 items)
Support Functions Scale (short form)	Dunst, C., Trivette, C. & Deal, A. (1988) Enabling and empowering families: principles and guidelines for practice. Cambridge, MA: Brookline Books May be copied free of charge	Parents rating of how much they need certain types of assistance	12 items rated on 5 point scale
The Family Grid	Davis, H. & Rushton, R (1991) Counselling and supporting parents of children with developmental delay: a research evaluation. Journal of Mental Deficiency Research, 35. 89-113	This tool is widely used in family assessment research Parents rate themselves, their partner and their child on a number of scales (eg patient – impatient), together with a rating for their 'ideal' self, partner and child	Parent self-completion

3. Mental health and well-being

Name	Reference	Use	Description
Beck Depression Inventory	Beck, A. & Steer, R. (1987) Beck Depression Inventory Manual. New York: The Psychological Corporation. Beck, A., Steer, R. & Garbin, M. (1988) Psychometric properties of the Beck Depression Inventory: twenty-five years of evaluation. Clinical Psychology Review, 8, 1, 77-100 Subject to copyright. Available from the Psychological Corporation. www.psychcorp.com	Focuses specifically on depression, considers both severity and specific symptoms. High correlation with clinician's ratings of depression	21 items rated on 4 point scale. Quick to complete
Centre for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale	Radloff, L.S., (1977) The CES-D Scale: A Self-report Depression Scale for Research in the General Population, Applied Psychological Measurement 1, 385-401	Measures the persistence and severity of depressive symptoms. Considers symptoms present during the last week. Not designed as a clinical diagnostic tool	20 items. Self-report or administered
Edinburgh Post Natal Depression Inventory	Cox, J. L., Holden, J. & Sagovsky, R. (1987) Detection of Postnatal Depression: Development of the 10-item Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale, British Journal of Psychiatry 150, 782-786	Screens for depression. Acceptable to mothers who may not consider themselves to be unwell or in need of help	Self-report. 10 items
General Health Questionnaire (GHQ)	Goldberg, D (1992) General Health Questionnaire, Windsor: NFER-Nelson Subject to copyright. May be purchased from NFER-Nelson. www.nfer-nelson.co.uk	Commonly used measure of distress and mental health. Detects presence and degree of non-psychotic psychiatric disorders	Self-report. Various versions available (12 items, 28 items, 30 items, 60 items). In each case, items rated on 4 point scale. (28 item scale takes less than 5 minutes)

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Name	Reference	Use	Description
Generalised Self-Efficacy Scale	Schwarzer, R. (ed) (1992) Self-efficacy: Thought Control of Action, Washington, DC: Hemisphere	Self-efficacy is a personal coping resource, sometimes referred to as 'optimistic self-belief'. The scale assesses the strength of an individual's belief in his/her ability to respond to new or difficult situations	Self-report 10 items
Personal Mood (modified version of Beck Depression Inventory)	Beck, A., Ward, C., Mendelson,M., Mock, J. & Erbaugh, J. (1961) An inventory for measuring depression. Archives of General Psychiatr, 4 561-571 May be copied free of charge	Measures depression	12 items on 7 point scale
Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale	Rosenberg, M. (1965) Society and the adolescent self-image Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press May be copied free of charge	Widely used measure of self-attitudes and global self-esteem	Self-administered. 10 items rated on a 4-point scale
Rutter Malaise Inventory	Rutter, M., Tizard, J. & Whitmore, K. (1970) Education, health and behaviour. London: Longman		24 questions with yes/no answers

4. Satisfaction with services

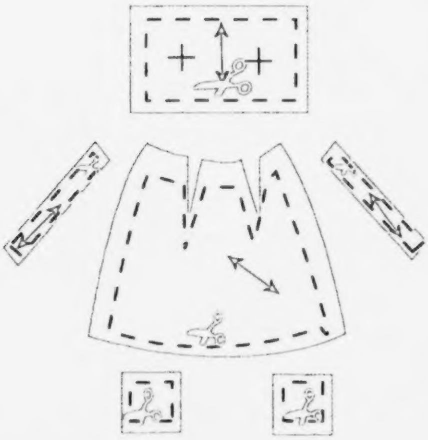
Name	Reference	Use	Description
Consumer Satisfaction Questionnaire	Forehand, R., Wells, K. & Greist, D. (1980) An examination of the social validity of a parent training program. Behaviour Therapy 11. 488-502	Parents' satisfaction with parenting service.	11 questions.
Measure of Processes of Care (MPOC)	King, G., Rosenbaum, P. & King, S. (1997) Evaluating a family-centred service using a measure of parents' perceptions. Child: Care, Health and Development 23. 47-62	Measures delivery of services from users' perspective. Designed for parents of disabled children, but could be adapted	56 item questionnaire.

5. Child behaviour, development and mental health

Name	Reference	Use	Description
Achenbach Child Behaviour Checklist	Achenbach, T.M. (1991) Manual for the Child Behavior Checklist, Burlington, VT: University of Vermont Subject to copyright. Available from www.nelson.com	Measures behaviour problems in children. Many versions available for different age groups (from 2 to 18)	Scored by parent and teacher. Can be self-report or administered; self-report version for 11-18 year-olds
Child Well-Being Scales	Magura, S.& Moses, B. (1986) Outcome measures for child welfare services: theory and applications. Washington DC: Child Welfare League of America	Rates extent to which child's physical, social and psychological needs are being met	43 items. Completed by interviewer on basis of home observation, case notes etc
Conners Rating Scales	Goyette, C., Conners, K. & Ulrich, F. (1998) Normative data on revised Conners parent and teacher rating scales. Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 6(2), 221-236 May be purchased from NFER-Nelson www.nfer-nelson.co.uk	Instrument for measuring hyperactivity and changes resulting from intervention in children and young people aged 3 to 17	Parent, teacher and adolescent self-report versions. Long and short forms available
Eyburg Child Behavior Inventory	Eyberg, S. & Ross, A. (1978) Assessment of Child Behaviour Problems: The Validation of New Inventory, Journal of Clinical Child Psychology, 7, 113-116 Subject to copyright. Available from www.parinc.com	Problem behaviours for children aged 2-16. Parents rate the intensity of each problem, and also whether this behaviour is currently a problem for them.	Scored by parents or teachers. 36 items on 7 point scale. (Approx 5 minutes)
Parent Account of Child Symptoms	Taylor, E., Schachar, R., Thorley, G. & Wieselberg, M. (1986) Conduct disorder and hyperactivity 1: Separation of hyperactivity and anti-social conduct in British child psychiatric patients. British Journal of Psychiatry. 149. 760-767 No copyright restrictions, but training is needed (contact Prof Eric Taylor, Institute of Psychiatry, Maudsley Hospital on 020 7919 3488)	Interview schedule for use with parents of 6-11 year-olds, specifically addressing hyperactivity and conduct disorder	Tool takes under an hour to administer

Name	Reference	Use	Description
Parent Daily Report	Patterson, G., Reid, J. & Maerov, S. (1978) The Observational System: Methodological issues and psychometric properties. In Reid, J. (ed), A social learning approach to family intervention. Vol 2: Observations in the home setting. Eugene, OR: Castalia	Interview format principally used as a measure of change. Telephone interview with parent everyday for a week, asking whether series of problem behaviours have occurred in previous 24 hours	Administered phone interview with parent. (10 minutes per day)
Piers-Harris Children's Self-concept Scale	Piers, E.V. & Harris D.B. Subject to copyright. Can be ordered over the internet from www.centreforevaluationresearch.com or www.wpspublish.com	'The way I feel about myself'. Measures a child's self-evaluative attitudes and behaviours that have a bearing on self-concept. Suitable for children aged 8-18	Self-report questionnaire. 80 statements requiring yes/no responses. Takes 15-20 minutes
Pre-school Behaviour Questionnaire	Behar, L. & Stringfield, S. (1974) A behaviour rating scale for the pre-school child, Developmental Psychology, 10, 601-610	Behaviour of 3-6 year olds rated by parent/carer	30 items on 3 point scale
Revised Behaviour Problem Checklist	Quay, H. & Peterson, D. (1999) Revised Behaviour Problem Checklist PAR Edition. (website abstract) Subject to copyright. Available from www.parinc.com	Focuses on a range of problem behaviours in young people aged 5 to 18. Can be used to screen for problem behaviours and to measure change	Can be completed by teacher, parent or other observer. (Takes about 20 minutes)
State-Trait Anxiety Inventory for Children (STAIC)	Spielberger, C.D. et al Can be ordered over the internet from www.parinc.com or www.mindgarden.com	'How I feel questionnaire'. Provides an indication of how anxious children feel at a particular moment (state) and in general (trait). Intended for use with 9-12 year olds, but can be used with older or younger children	Two 20-item self-report scales. Takes 8-20 minutes. Can be administered individually or in group

Name	**Reference**	**Use**	**Description**
Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)	Goodman, R. (1997), The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire: a research note. Journal of Child psychology and Psychiatry, 38, 5, 581-586 All versions available free of charge from www.sdqinfo.com	Developed from the Rutter Scales. Measures emotional and behavioural problems in children and young people. Includes both positive attributes and problem behaviours. Includes post-intervention 'follow-up' version	Versions for parents and teachers. Also a self-report version for young people aged 11-16. 25 statements rated on 3 point scale. Quick to administer. Available in over 40 different languages
The Rutter Scales	Erlander, J. & Rutter, M. (1996) An Update on the Status of the Rutter Parents' and Teachers' Scales, Child Psychology and Psychiatry Review, 1.1, 31-35 Subject to copyright. May be purchased from NFER-Nelson. www.nfer-nelson.co.uk	Focuses on conduct disorder and emotional disturbance in young people aged around 9 to 13	Self completion questionnaires for parents (31 items) and teachers (fewer items), each using 3 point scale. Takes a few minutes



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evaluation toolkit

a tailored approach to evaluation for parenting projects

Evaluation is a challenging process in itself. Add to this the sheer variety of settings in which parenting work takes place, the multitude of different models and approaches in use, the range of needs being addressed and the tremendous variety of scale and resources... and the most useful toolkit becomes one that enables projects to tailor their evaluations to fit.

The Toolkit is designed primarily for people who are new to evaluation. But it also contains advice and guidance for those with a higher level of understanding or knowledge. It is of use to practitioners and managers undertaking evaluation and as a basis for commissioning external evaluators. While the Toolkit is aimed at parenting projects, the general approach can easily be applied to a range of other social and educational programmes.

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